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IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

OXFORD:

PRINTED BY S. COLLINGWOOD, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY,

FOR J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON.

SOLD BY J. H. PARKER, OXFORD.

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CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

PARABLE ELEVENTH. MORAL.

The Good Samaritan ..... P. 1
Preliminary Matter 2
Material Circumstances 39
Material Circumstances, Moral, and Application 50

PARABLE TWELFTH. MORAL.

The Rich Man's Ground 71
Preliminary Matter 72
Material Circumstances, Moral, and Application 133

PARABLES THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

The Servants left in waiting for their Lord. The Servant left instead of his Lord 158
Preliminary Matter 160
Material Circumstances, Moral, and Interpretation 280

PARABLE FIFTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

The Barren Fig-tree. Preliminary Matter 336
Material Circumstances, and Moral 356
The Interpretation 365

PARABLE SIXTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

The Great Supper. Material Circumstances 401
The Moral 438
The Interpretation 467

PARABLE SEVENTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

The Prodigal Son 492
Material Circumstances 493
The Moral 529
The Interpretation 567

ERRATUM.

Vol. i. page 334 line 15, *for* A. D. 250 *read* A. D. 297.

Works by the same author.

Dissertations upon the Principles and Arrangement of an Harmony of the Gospels. In three volumes. Oxford, at the University Press. 1830.

Harmonia Evangelica, sive quatuor Evangelia Græce, pro Temporis et Rerum Serie, in Partes quinque distributa. Oxonii, e Typographeo Academico. MDCCCXXX.

Joannis Miltoni Fabulæ Samson Agonistes et Comus, Græce. Oxonii, excudebat S. Collingwood, Academiæ Typographus, veneunt apud J. H. Parker, etc. MDCCCXXXII.

In the Press.

Supplementary Dissertations, and Annotations, &c. In one volume.

PARABLE ELEVENTH. MORAL.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE X. 25—37. HARMONY, P. IV. 27.

Luke x. 25—37.

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, tempting him, and saying, "Master, what shall I do, and inherit everlasting life?" 26 And he said unto him, "In the law what is written? how "dost thou read?" 27 And he answered and said, "Thou "shalt love the LORD thy God with thy whole heart, and with "thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength, and with thy "whole mind: and thy neighbour (*thou shalt love*) as thyself." 28 And he said unto him, "Thou hast answered rightly: this "do, and thou shalt live."

29 And he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, "But "who is my neighbour?" 30 And Jesus answered and said, "A "certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho: and "he fell in with robbers, who having both stripped him of *his* "*raiment*, and laid strokes upon him, went their way, having "left him *as one* being half dead. 31 Now it chanced at the time "that a certain Priest was going down by that way: and when "he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And in like "manner a Levite also, being come over against the place, "came and saw and passed by on the other side. 33 But a cer-"tain Samaritan as he was journeying, came over against where "he was; and when he had seen him, was moved with pity. "34 And he went to *him* and bound up his wounds, pouring "into *them* oil and wine. And having set him upon his own "beast, he brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And "on the morrow, having gone forth *of the inn*, he took out two "pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said to him, Take thou

" care of him; and whatsoever thou mayest spend more *than*
" *these*, I, when I am coming back again, will repay thee.
" 36 Which then of these three seemeth to thee to have been a
" neighbour of him that had fallen among the robbers?" 37 And
he said, " He that did the kindness to him." Jesus therefore
said unto him, " Go thy way, and do thou in like wise."

PRELIMINARY MATTER.

THE parable of the good Samaritan might have been called, with more propriety, the parable in answer to the question, Who is my neighbour? and this denomination would have intimated the occasion out of which it arose. The expediency of replying to such an inquiry by an example, may be shewn hereafter: but as even this particular question arose out of a conversation on a more general subject, between our Lord and a certain lawyer, we shall not be prepared to enter with advantage either on the question, or on the parable which assigns the reply to it, until we have considered the particulars of the previous discourse.

No part of the gospel history, according to St. Luke, is related with less mention of special circumstances, like those of time and place, than this: no doubt, because such mention was perfectly immaterial to the narrative itself; the moral uses of which were abundantly sufficient to render the present incident worthy of record, solely on its own account. All that we can infer with respect to these circumstances is, that our Saviour was teaching in one of the synagogues—if not of Capernaum, yet probably of some other of the towns of Galilee—when a certain lawyer, or teacher of the law, stood

up, and proposed the question, which was the foundation of the subsequent discourse; "What shall I do, "and inherit everlasting life?"

It can scarcely be necessary to explain the terms of an inquiry like this. The phrase, everlasting life, it may be taken for granted, refers to the life to come; and even the idea of *inheriting* this life, though originally derived from the Hebrew idiom, is too familiar to readers of the New Testament, not to be readily understood. With respect to any further questions, as, whether the expectation of a life to come was always entertained among the Jews; or if not, at what time it began to be current with them—and the like; these are inquiries, on which we have no need to enter at present. We have good grounds for asserting that the doctrine of a future life was not unknown to the Jews of our Saviour's time; and that the expectation of it then, was one of the articles of the popular belief, whether it had always been so or not. The question now proposed would itself be a proof of this fact; were no other evidence of it supplied, by a variety of allusions besides, in the gospel accounts. The idea of inheriting any thing supposes the possible possession of it *hereafter*, but excludes the idea of its actual possession at present. No one could inquire what was to be done to inherit everlasting life, who did not know beforehand that everlasting life was to be inherited on certain terms; though he might not yet know the particular nature of the terms themselves. We must have inferred then, from the words of the question, that the Jew who put it, believed everlasting life to be promised, on certain conditions; and possible to be inherited hereafter, by compli-

ance with the conditions here; though he did not know what the conditions were: and we must have inferred from the answer returned to it, that the promise which conveyed the assurance of that life, was virtually contained in the law of Moses, and the statement of the conditions to which its inheritance was attached, was actually so.

It seems to me a more interesting, as well as a more necessary subject of inquiry, preliminary to our present business, which is the consideration of the series of questions and replies out of which the parable ultimately arose—to investigate and do justice to the nature of the motive, which prompted the interrogator on this occasion, to put both his first and his second question: especially, as in speaking of each of these questions, the language of the evangelist is calculated apparently to produce *one* construction of the character of that motive, and the circumstances of the case themselves, such as they are recorded, to justify *another*. Whether the language of St. Luke does necessarily lead to this construction, will be considered hereafter. At present, we may observe, that if the motive of the inquirer, who stood up to put the question to our Saviour, in the first instance, was not innocent and venial, it was of course captious and sinister; of which two constructions of its nature, that which appears to me the most just and reasonable, as well as the most charitable, is, on many accounts, the former.

If we except those two expressions of the evangelist's, the meaning of which will be discussed by and by, there is nothing on the face of the narrative, to raise a suspicion of the simplicity of the interrogator's motives, or inconsistent with the fa-

vourable impression otherwise produced by his conduct. The manner in which he is supposed to have put his inquiry to our Lord, had nothing disrespectful in it: nor in putting a question to him was he doing a thing contrary to the custom of the age and nation, or what a public teacher of acknowledged ability and competent authority, among the Jews, was not liable at all times, to have done to him. If he was not previously a disciple of Jesus, yet by assuming the attitude and address of a scholar, he acknowledged him, apparently, for his master, *pro hac vice*, and professed a willingness to be taught by him, on the point in question.

To ask for information on any subject was so far a confession of his own ignorance about it; to ask for instruction on the subject of eternal life, implied not only that, but a sense of the importance and value of knowledge on such a point, above all others. To ask for information with this view, from our Lord especially, was virtually to acknowledge that he only was capable of affording it: that he only could resolve the inquiry so much more personal than every inquiry, what may be hoped for, what is to be feared, beyond the grave; he only could convey the assurance, so much more interesting than all other assurances, what must be done to secure the good and to eschew the evil, both of them the possible consequences of a life to come.

We cannot conceive a question, which could have been put to a teacher, like our Lord, not only with less indecorum, but with more of propriety than this; nor any point of practical concern to moral agents, on which an humble and sincere searcher after truth, would more naturally desire satisfaction

from a competent authority. I have already observed, that the inquiry takes it for granted, everlasting life was to be obtained; but implies a doubt or an ignorance, by what means, or on what conditions. Now the stronger the certainty of a life to come, the more important is the practical question resulting, what is to be done with a view to its attainment. Serious minds the more habitually they are impressed with the conviction of the one, the more exclusively they are fixed on the decision of the other. The more certain they are of a life to come, and of the future personal consequences of an hereafter to all, the more deeply they are interested in the present, the immediate—the preliminary—consideration, what influence this belief should have on their own conduct, in what way this futurity is likely to affect themselves. And if the Jews, in our Saviour's time, were more or less generally convinced of the article of faith, but were still divided in opinion on the question of practice, arising out of it; that would be only an additional argument with a pious and reflecting mind, the more eagerly to seek the solution of its doubts wherever it was to be satisfactorily obtained; and not willingly to remain in ignorance and uncertainty, where every thing depended on knowledge and assurance, and the want of either was full of danger to so important and personal a concern, as the individual's everlasting welfare.

The language in which the question was couched, affords some presumption in favour of the interrogator's sincerity. Had it been expressed, "What "must be done to inherit everlasting life?" it would certainly have implied his desire for information on

one of the most important of practical questions; but not more as it applied to himself, than as it did to others; nor more, perhaps, as a practical truth than as a speculative assurance, intended as much to gratify the curiosity, as to enlighten and direct the conduct. Shaped as it is, however, "What "shall *I* do, and (by doing it) inherit everlasting "life?"—it implies a conviction at bottom of the speaker's individual concern in the resolution of his inquiry; and a predisposition, inseparable from such a conviction, to act up to the solution so obtained. It was the consciousness of that personal concern in the satisfaction of the doubt, which appears to have prompted the question itself. And we should be bound to conclude, on the strength of such an assumption, that his conduct who put it, was that of an humble and sincere inquirer after saving truth—aware of his own ignorance, disposed to be grateful for any knowledge which might be imparted to him—and already prepared to make the proper use of it in practice. Men who act from a sense of their personal interest, and with a view to consequences affecting themselves, cannot be deficient in sincerity.

The condescension of our Lord in reply to his inquiries, the full and satisfactory solution which he vouchsafed to both his doubts, are an argument that his questions were not unacceptable to him, either in themselves, or in the circumstances under which they were put; that the motive of the interrogator was innocent at least; that his behaviour was decent and respectful; and that his solicitude on the points at issue was neither pretended nor unreasonable. If we examine the instances when questions were put to our Lord, in the course of his

ministry, on different subjects, sometimes with a good and sometimes with a bad intent; sometimes by friends, sometimes by enemies; we shall find, that though he answers them all, he does not answer them all alike, but according to the merits of the case, and the particular design and purpose which prompted the inquiry. If a question was proposed to him with an insidious view, however artfully framed and plausibly disguised; he fails not to shew that, by his power of discerning the thoughts, he was aware of the latent hypocrisy; nor to rebuke it openly. On one occasion, he reproved a certain inquirer for prefacing his address to him even by the epithet of *good;* though it seems from the narrative that he meant to apply it to him seriously. It is more than probable, therefore, that had there been any thing amiss in the conduct of the present inquirer—any thing though excusable, yet faulty—much more, any thing blamable and improper, like the indulgence of an idle curiosity—a desire to try our Saviour's knowledge—a wish to display himself—a captious spirit of disputation—or the hope of eliciting something from our Lord, which might be turned to his disadvantage with the people: the answer would have implied that Jesus was aware of it, and meant to reprove or rebuke it accordingly.

The same question, or one substantially identified with it, was twice afterwards put to our Saviour, and on each occasion was answered by him with the utmost readiness and plainness. The first of these instances was the conversation with the rich young ruler[a]; the second was the occasion when the ques-

[a] Matt. xix. 16—22. Mark x. 17—22. Luke xviii. 18—23. Harm. P. iv. 52.

tion was proposed, "What kind of commandment is "great in the law?" *or* "What kind of command-"ment is first of all[b]?" A singular encomium is pronounced on the inquirers, upon each of these occasions. Of the first of them, it is said, that Jesus *loved* him; that is, was moved with affection and good-will, directly excited by his behaviour, so much so as actually to invite him to become his disciple: of the second it is said, that before he put his question, he was induced to do so, out of an admiration of the wisdom just displayed in our Lord's answer to the Sadducees; and after he had put it, and received the reply, upon his expressing his entire concurrence in the answer, that our Lord himself commended the discreetness of his observations; and said of him, that with such sentiments, he was not far from the kingdom of God; he was already predisposed to become a Christian.

And that the question put upon this last occasion, was substantially the same with the present, may be inferred both from the reason of the thing, that the commandment which is greatest in the law, must be most effectual towards the attainment of everlasting life; and also because St. Luke, whose narrative of the proceedings on Wednesday in Passion-week, accompanies St. Matthew's and St. Mark's, before the time of this question and directly after it, entirely omits the account of the question. The most probable reason of the omission is, that the substance of the question, and of the answer returned to it, had been virtually anticipated by him, in the account of some former transaction: which must

[b] Matt. xxii. 34—40. Mark xii. 28—34. Harm. P. iv. 72.

have been what passed on the present occasion. It is the rule of St. Luke to relate nothing of the same kind twice. Indeed the substantial agreement of the two questions is proved by the agreement of the replies, respectively returned to them. The same two commandments are produced as the instances of the two greatest commandments in the law, on the second occasion, upon which the inheritance of everlasting life was made to depend, on the first.

The reply of the man himself to our Saviour's question, "In the law what is written? how dost "thou read?"—proves much in his favour; that he possessed a mind, elevated above the level of his age, and enlightened with more than its partial knowledge; that he was as original a thinker, as a candid, and unprejudiced inquirer; that he had examined and meditated for himself, on the particulars of his duty, and had come to his own conclusions with a more correct judgment on certain nice and critical questions—with a clearer insight into the nature and design of the law, and a juster appreciation of the relative value of its different component parts—than most of his contemporaries possessed.

It is very true that, as lawyers, teachers of the law, and scribes were all denominations of one and the same class of persons[c], who by profession were the interpreters and expounders of the law; it is no wonder that one of their number should be familiar with the writings of Moses, and readily allege their contents. But it is truly a singular circumstance that, in answer to so general a question as this, In the law what is written? he should lay his finger on two isolated, solitary texts; which no where

[c] Cf. Luke xi. 44, 45. Mark xii. 38. Luke xx. 46.

follow each other in conjunction; which are scattered in the body of the law, a great distance apart, and could not easily be brought together[d]; which have no eminence nor distinction assigned them in the original, above the rest, and certainly are no where formally recommended, as singly equivalent to *all* the rest: that he should cite them too, as what they truly are, pregnant and comprehensive truths, including the substance of so much more, contained in the law besides; and that his choice of these two texts, as the most complete epitome of the rest of the law, should be so judicious and correct, as to draw from our Lord at the time a direct approval of it—that he had answered rightly; that he had cited what was indeed the sum and substance of *all* the law—and to be still more plainly confirmed hereafter, when in reply to a similar question, he himself produced the same two texts, with this remarkable declaration, that besides those two, there was no other commandment essentially different from them, or intrinsically possessed of a superior excellence and a stronger moral obligation; that the teaching both of Moses and of the prophets, hung upon and was suspended from these two—neither of them doing more than to explain and enlarge, to enforce and apply in various ways, the same two principles of religious, moral, and personal obligation, which together made up the whole duty of man.

[d] The first occurs Deuteronomy vi. 5: "And thou shalt love "the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, "and with all thy might." The second, Lev. xix. 18: "Thou "shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of "thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I "*am* the LORD."

It is manifest also, that by producing these texts as the substance of the law, which are in truth the substance only of a part of it; viz. its moral or religious part; he virtually set aside the merely ritual, as comparatively of small importance, or rather of none whatever: and therefore did more than dispose of the further question, What commandment was greatest in the law, by affirming that there was no room for comparison of force and obligation, of dignity and excellence, between its several parts at all; that there was but one class of commandments, or but two commandments belonging to that class, which were of any account in point of moral estimation; which could be called and considered the *law*, in the proper sense of the word.

It is worthy of remark, that our Saviour, though addressed by a question, instead of returning a direct answer to it, replied by a question himself; and by a question apparently not connected with the original inquiry. On the other two occasions, which we have referred to, he did no such thing; but answered each of the questions directly and to the point. May we not infer that if he did otherwise in the present instance, it was not without design? and may we not consider it a proof both of his own condescension, and also of the ability, yet withal the modesty and diffidence of the inquirer? If he answered him through his own mouth, it might be because he knew him to be capable already of satisfying his own doubts for himself, to a certain extent; and where he was likely to stop short, he intended to interpose his own authority, and assist him forward. He might have preferred to conduct him to the desired conclusion upon the strength and assur-

ance of premises, into which he previously possessed a clear insight; though he wanted confidence to draw from them for himself, an inference equally clear and legitimate. For it appears from the sequel, that the interrogator was even then aware to what conditions the promise of eternal life was *virtually* attached; though he required more certainty as to the fact of its being *actually* so attached.

The true answer to the question "What shall I "do, and inherit everlasting life?" is contained in the words, "This do, and thou shalt live:" as their very form implies: "This do," being critically accommodated to "What shall I do," and "Thou shalt live," to "And shall inherit everlasting life." Now this is an answer, manifestly interposed *authoritatively*, in our Lord's sense of his own competency so to interpose it; and it was to be received *implicitly*, in deference to the *ipse dixit* and assurance of its author. And interposed authoritatively as it is, it is still in the shape of a *promise* annexed to a *condition;* the promise of *life* as the consequence of *doing;* that doing being the observance of the two commandments, the sum and substance of the law, the statement of which furnished the answer to the intermediate question. It seems reasonable, therefore, to presume that the object of the question was to elicit the statement, by way of preliminary; and this being done, to found upon that statement the desired assurance, which served as the answer to the original inquiry.

Now the question of our Saviour includes two propositions, "What is written?" and "How dost "thou read?" which are far from being identical. The first concerns a *matter of fact*, equally notorious

to all who were conversant in the law—what was actually contained therein, or enjoined by it? the second a *matter* of private *opinion* or private *judgment*, which could be known only to the respondent; how he himself *read*, that is, apprehended, understood, and construed the many and various injunctions and precepts, on record in the word of God? His answer is adapted to both these propositions: to the first, as stating what was actually part of the law; to the second, as stating it virtually with his own constructive sense of it as the *epitome*, the *multum in parvo* of the whole. His answer too was satisfactory to our Saviour, with respect to both; for his approbation pronounced upon that answer, implies that it was such, as by his own question he had wished or expected to obtain. He had answered *rightly;* that is, he had cited the law correctly; and he had reasoned upon the citation justly; such was indeed the substance of the law.

It would be no objection to the supposed rectitude of the inquirer's motive in the present instance; could it be proved that besides being a lawyer or Scribe, he was also a Pharisee. The majority of that sect were certainly the personal enemies of our Saviour, and his most virulent opponents with the people; yet some even among them dissented from the rest, and either openly, or secretly in their own minds, were favourably disposed towards our Lord. It is but necessary to assume that this man was one of those, who whether many or few, thought honourably of the authority of our Saviour; and we assign a sufficient reason why *he* should have addressed *him*, in a question of so much practical importance as this was, with the

most honest and upright intent. Nor is it impossible that, even as Pharisees, both this Scribe and the other, who held the conversation with our Lord, recorded Mark xii. 28—34. were Pharisees who belonged to the party of the Karaites, or men of the letter; so called as acknowledging no rule of faith or practice, but the written word of God; and therefore, discarding altogether the whole system of traditionary interpretation, as the mere invention of men. This sect was certainly small in numbers, and totally inconsiderable in popular influence; but they were weighty in judgment and in real knowledge; and from the peculiar nature of their principles themselves, they would be the most candid and liberal, and open to conviction, of their contemporaries; the most likely to ponder well the evidences of our Saviour's character; and on many accounts, to be predisposed in his favour.

The motives, which actuated the inquirer, are specified, indeed, by the evangelist, in the words, ἐκπειράζων αὐτὸν, prefixed to his first question, and those of, θέλων δικαιοῦν ἑαυτὸν, premised to his second: the former of which is rendered in the English version, by, "And tempted him;" the latter by, "Will-"ing to justify himself." But the words of the original in each instance, are capable of another meaning, which is much more consistent with the supposed honesty and simplicity of the interrogator's motive, than either of these versions would be.

The word which is rendered "to tempt," denotes properly no more than to *try*, to *prove*, to *ascertain by experiment*, and the like; but for what particular purpose in the trial, and whether with a good or a bad intent, is not necessarily implied by the

word itself. The English word " to tempt," might originally denote no more; being derived from a word in the Latin, exactly the same in meaning as the verb which it expresses in the Greek. And in this sense must it have been intended by our translators, Gen. xxii. 1, to express the act of the Deity in *tempting*, that is, *making trial* of Abraham, when he commanded him to sacrifice his son; an act which the Septuagint also expresses by the corresponding verb in Greek.

Now the mere act of trying or proving, necessarily involves nothing of the final end of the proof or trial. That end may be innocent, and it may be otherwise; yet the same word may still be employed to denote the act itself. It is not to be denied that the word πειράζω in Greek, *tento* in Latin, and *tempt* in English, may be so used, (and often are,) as to imply the act of trying or proving, with a malicious, a sinister, a criminal intent; more especially for the act of trying or proving the strength of principle, religious or moral, with a view to allure unto sin. And for this reason, as being the principal agent in all such trials of principle for such purposes, the Devil himself is designated in scripture as regularly by the name of ὁ πειράζων " the tryer" *or* " tempter;" as by that of ὁ πονηρὸς, " the evil one;" ὁ ἐχθρὸς, " the " enemy;" ὁ Σατανᾶς, " Satan;" or ὁ Διαβόλος, " the " Devil:" the first of which only properly expresses him as what he is, especially when contradistinguished to God, as ὁ ἀγαθὸς, " the good one."

But this is a secondary and improper sense of the word; and whether it is to be understood in a given instance, with that further enlargement or qualification of its meaning, or not, must be deter-

mined by the special reasons of the case. To apply this criterion to its use in the present passage. The idea of trying with a view to *tempt*, that is, to *persuade* to something *unlawful* or *criminal*, would manifestly be absurd, if supposed to be the final end of the interrogator's present act. It follows, then, that the word, which expresses this act, cannot here have its secondary sense of to *tempt;* but simply its natural and proper one, of trying or proving.

If however the motive of the inquirer was merely to try or prove our Saviour, and that by a question, the reason of the thing requires we should suppose that it was first of all with a view to the kind of answer which would be returned to the question, and to the degree of ability, wisdom, or judgment, which should be displayed in that answer. And as to the further object contemplated by such a discovery; either it was an idle and frivolous curiosity, to ascertain the extent of his knowledge and capacity; or a captious desire to perplex him by a difficulty; or a serious and respectful wish to consult him, as a competent authority, on an important practical point. It seems to me that our Saviour's manner of receiving and entertaining the question, and the other considerations already suggested, refute the two first of these suppositions; and therefore establish the third. To *consult*, then, is the sense of the verb in the present instance; and, "A certain lawyer stood "up, consulting him, and saying;" would not be an inaccurate version of the passage. It is peculiar too to the verb in this instance, to be compounded with a preposition denoting intensity, along with which it occurs only thrice besides in the New Testament, and on each occasion with the same degree of

emphasis as at present [e]. If there is a meaning in this addition, it implies a more than usual anxiety and earnestness in the interrogator, with regard to the end which he proposed by consulting Jesus—the satisfaction of his personal doubts on the point in question.

These conclusions appear to be confirmed by comparing Matt. xxii. 35. with Mark xii. 28. in the account relating to the parallel instance of the other question, "What sort of commandment was great "in the law?" St. Matthew expresses the act of the person who put that question, by the same verb which is here rendered *to tempt;* St. Mark says merely, that he asked or questioned our Saviour; but he also shews, that if he had it in view to *try* him, or to *discover* something else by the question, the object of the trial was becoming and innocent; the curiosity of the inquirer was neither frivolous nor captious. For he attributes the act of the inquirer to his admiration of the wisdom displayed a moment before, in our Saviour's reply to the Sadducees [f].

With regard to the observation premised to the second question; if the original verb is to be rendered by to *justify*, and to justify be understood in its pro-

[e] Matt. iv. 7; Luke iv. 12; 1 Cor. x. 9.

[f] Indeed, there is every reason to suppose, that St. Mark in his account of this conversation, has purposely explained and particularized the general statements of St. Matthew; in order to remove every possible misconstruction to which the latter, from their conciseness, were liable; and especially to do justice to the character and motives of the author of the question, which the use of such a term as πειράζων, *tempting*—(unless explained) to describe them, might appear to have prejudged and compromised.

per acceptation of *vindicating* or *excusing;* then the *fact* of such vindication would imply the sense of its *necessity;* and its necessity, some *fault* or *error*, previously committed, which required *apology*, *excuse*, or *defence*. Now what fault had the individual been guilty of, except that of asking a question? and if there was any thing wrong in that, must it not have been an absurd mode of defending, excusing, or justifying himself for it, to ask another; that is, to repeat the offence of which he had already been guilty?

But the words which are rendered to *justify himself*, may also be rendered to *make himself just*, or *righteous;* and to make himself just or righteous, under the circumstances of the case, must be understood as equivalent to *making himself perfect*. The righteousness in question was that which was necessary to the inheritance of everlasting life; that is, it was the righteousness required by the law, in order to the attainment of the promises held out by the law: and the righteousness required by the law, with that view, could be nothing less than the perfect discharge of all the duties which it enjoined. The words premised to the second question, then, may denote the further motive of the inquirer in asking it, if notwithstanding the assurance already vouchsafed to him, in answer to his former question, he was still ignorant of something essential to its right apprehension, and still more to its just application —a desire to make himself perfect in the knowledge of his duty, with a view to make himself perfect in the discharge of it also.

The truth appears to be this. The dialectical method of disputation, that is, the practice of seek-

ing information by asking questions and receiving answers, we know not only from the New Testament, which supplies a variety of instances of it[g], but also from the Talmudical or Rabbinical writings, to have been common among the Jews. The coincidence not merely between the sense, but even the terms of the question proposed to our Saviour on this occasion, "What shall I do, and inherit everlast-" ing life?" and those of the same question as proposed on the next occasion, which St. Luke expresses in the very same words[h], seems to imply both that the question itself was one of frequent debate and discussion;—a question on which the wisdom of the sages of the law was ordinarily exercised, or ordinarily liable to be exercised; (and that this was the reason, why each of the parties who proposed these questions respectively, applied for their solution to our Saviour in particular;) and also, that in the terms in which it is set forth, we see the form of the question, the *status quæstionis* or *problema*, as currently proposed for discussion under such circumstances: "What shall I do, and inherit everlast-" ing life?" or, "What shall I do, that I may in-" herit everlasting life?" The same may be observed of the other question, "What kind of commandment " is great in the law?" or, "What kind of com-" mandment is first of all?"

The disposition to practise one's duty, when known, is naturally prior to the desire to know it; but the acquisition of the knowledge which must regulate the practice, is necessary to its application to

[g] See particularly Luke ii. 46. Harm. P. i. 15.
[h] Chap. xviii. 18.

the conduct. Suppose an individual moral agent sincerely desirous of ascertaining his duty, because sincerely desirous of practising it—to ask for information from a competent instructor; suppose him to receive the answer to his inquiry in a concise, authoritative rule of conduct, the observance of which will render him perfect; suppose this rule to be clear and intelligible in every point of its application, but one, and that a very important one: the same motive which prompted him to ask for information on such a subject in general, would necessarily induce him to ask for further satisfaction on this one point in particular; and that too with a view or purpose, which might well be characterised as "a desire to make himself perfect."

It was not possible to mistake the import of the first precept, cited as necessary to perfection, either in the object of the love required, God; or in the measure or degree of the love due to him—with all the faculties both of soul and body: nor was it easy to mistake the import of the second, in the rate or proportion of the affection due to its object, our neighbour, whom it required every one to love as he loved himself. But with regard to the object of this love itself—that is, with regard to what was meant by the neighbour, to whom this degree of affection was due—the case might be very different—a difficulty might exist, very perplexing and distressing to a serious and well-disposed Jew, of which no Christian, with his better knowledge, and more enlightened estimate of the nature, particulars, and extent of his duty in the same respect, can form an adequate idea. In fixing upon this object, and consequently in defining the scope of the precept, reason,

humanity, and the word of God might decide one way; authority, prejudice, tradition, another.

It might be plain to a demonstration, that the interpretation of the words, "thy neighbour," was not to be restricted to their first and ordinary sense, of one who lived in the vicinity of another; nor yet of one, who whether a neighbour in that sense or not, was near of kin to a man. But if they must imply something more than this, and comprehend strangers in local habitation, and strangers in blood; the question would at once occur, where must their application stop, short of including all mankind? If every neighbour, as the object of the love whose measure in practice was to be, *as a man's own self*—must be a stranger in these respects; then every one, who is a stranger in such respects, must be a neighbour: a definition of the term which would comprehend Samaritans and Gentiles, as well as Jews, in reference to Jews. Considering the precept too, as binding the Jews nationally, not merely individually, we might contend that to the Jews, in their collective and national capacity, none could be neighbours—none could consequently come within the scope and application of the precept—but surrounding nations; that is, the Gentiles. It is certain, however, that the Jews, in practice, denied these conclusions, and considered none but a Jew a neighbour of a Jew; and consequently none but Jews entitled to claim and to receive from Jews, the good offices due by one neighbour as such to another.

The inquirer in the present instance seems to have possessed a clearer insight into the true evangelical sense of the term, than most of his prejudiced countrymen; not unmixed however with some

doubt and obscurity, which he might gladly desire to have removed. When, therefore, the turn of the conversation gave him an opportunity of asking for information upon this point also, it seems to be implied in his language, that he availed himself of it with the eagerness of one who had long wished for it. His words should be translated, "*But* who is "my neighbour?" for the particle rendered by "*and*," is here equivalent to "*yet*" or "*but:*" and we might paraphrase them as follows; "It is a very true and "satisfactory assurance, that if I do these things, I "shall live: and when I am told to love God with "all my faculties, above every thing else, my duty "is plain and intelligible. When I am told also to "love my neighbour as myself, I should see what I "was bound to do to him, if I knew who was my "neighbour. *But who is my neighbour?* for I am "still uncertain on that point; and I know not "whether I am to understand those only to be "meant by the name, who stand in certain peculiar "relations to myself; or all, to whom the word is "in any sense, and under any circumstances, ca-"pable of being extended."

Now a doubt upon this point was manifestly of vast importance to the practical application of the precept; which, even with the best intention to do right, and the sincerest wish to observe the precept, might lead to its perversion and misdirection. One who felt this difficulty in its full force, could scarcely fail to request a solution of it; and if it was proper for the interrogator to ask for such a satisfaction, it was still more so for our Saviour to grant it. There was no question which could have been more fitly put to him, than this, "But who is my neigh-

" bour?" none that it was more consistent with his benevolence, his charity, his philanthropy, to answer; none that it would have given him more delight to answer: or were there any doubt about this, the beautiful parable, in which he does answer it, would remove that doubt, and be a lasting monument of the interest he took, in replying to such a question.

Before, however, we proceed to the parable itself, we may pause to make a few observations upon what has preceded. Considering the several questions referred to above, whether as to what should be done to inherit everlasting life, or as to the order of respective dignity, and quantum of respective obligation, in the different commandments of the law —to be virtually instances of the same inquiry, directed to the same result; the uniformity of decision which pervades the answers to them all, is a characteristic and remarkable circumstance. At first sight, indeed, there may appear nothing extraordinary in the *same* question's being *similarly* answered; or in the *same* person's entertaining and expressing, at all times, on the *same* subjects the *same* opinions. Yet if we consider the predominant prejudice of the age, and the general disposition on all hands, to exalt an inferior class of duties at the expense of an higher, and to depend upon that, as the groundwork of perfection, instead of the other; there was doubtless a studied and peculiar significancy, in our Saviour's conduct on each of these occasions.

It is to be remembered, that though his answers point all along to one and the same class of duties, as those which were competent to give life—as those

which were greatest in the law—it is but to a *class*, the *religious*, *moral*, or *natural*, in contradistinction to the *ritual*, *positive*, or *instituted*. The instance of the second inquiry supplies a luminous proof of this opposition and distinction. To take St. Mark's account of that transaction, the question then asked was ποία ἐστὶ πρώτη πασῶν ἐντολή; words, which should not be rendered, "Which is the first command-"ment of all?" as if some *one* commandment were specially the object of the inquiry; but "What "kind" or "sort of commandment;" in other words, "What class of commandments, what description of "duties, was first of all, was great in the law?" This mode of stating the question implies the only complete division of the whole law, into the moral and the ceremonial; and the acknowledgment subjoined by the interrogator, to our Saviour's answer, shews that in putting his inquiry he was intent upon a further consideration, viz. the comparative value and efficacy of these different classes of duties, as acceptable to God, and as conducive to salvation. Our Lord's decision, by adducing the two summaries of the moral law, awarded the preeminence, in such respects, to that law; while the remark of the inquirer, in approbation of his answer, by mentioning sacrifice and burnt offering in particular, as any *other* specific instances of obedience to the commandments of the law, clearly supposes that he knew of nothing which could be opposed to the moral part of the law, and could dispute the right to precedency with it, but the ritual: and by further affirming, that to observe the moral in those two comprehensive precepts, was really *more* (πλεῖον)—not simply a *greater*, but a *fuller*, a more *abundant*, a more *complete*

and *perfect* service—than "*all* the holocausts and "*all* the sacrifices," which were otherwise enjoined by the ritual part of the law, and otherwise to be offered in obedience to it; it also implied, that in his judgment the moral was capable of deserving and procuring acceptance, independent of the ritual; but not the latter without the former [i].

The two commandments, which on each of these occasions were selected and proposed as the substance of the moral law, might easily be shewn to be actually tantamount to the whole of it. They are the

[i] Grotius and Whitby, in their notes on Matt. xxii. 36. shew that, "What was the first and great commandment," was a question much agitated among the Jews: some contending for the law of circumcision; some for that of the sabbath; others for this or that kind of sacrifice, and the like: but none as it appears, for any one moral commandment, whether more or less comprehensive, in opposition to mere rites and ceremonies.

If, by citing the substance of the *moral part* of the law, as the substance of the *whole*, the rest of the law is virtually superseded and set aside; still, it is to be remembered that this is done, solely in answer to the question, "What is necessary to "everlasting life?" or "What sort of commandment is great in "the law?" *One part* is set aside—but merely in comparison with the *other part;* the lower in comparison with the higher: when both claimed to be equally accounted of; when what was the undoubted privilege, the exclusive benefit of the one, was unwarrantably usurped, and preposterously attempted by the other. No disparagement was intended to be done to the *ritual*, further than by not exalting it to the rank of the *moral;* by not falling in with the humour of the age, or countenancing the impossible and absurd idea, however popular, that the *law of ceremonies* could give *life*. The ritual law, in its own sphere and for its own purposes, might be holy, just, and good: it was imperfect, useless, and even impure, when it intruded itself into the place of the moral; and pretended to a dignity, and arrogated to itself an efficacy, which belonged only to a superior and a very different class of duties.

epitome of the duties of the two tables, which taken in conjunction comprehend the entire duty of a responsible being like man[k]. The principle of *love*, on which the observance of each is founded, is naturally an active principle. The love of God, when sincerely felt and cherished, is a guarantee for the performance of all those duties which regard or concern God, as soon as they are known and ascertained. When the will of God, on any subject, whether as appertaining to himself or to other things, is once understood, the love of God is a motive to its being obeyed; and a pledge that, so far as the ability of the agent, who is to be actuated by such a motive, will permit, it shall be cheerfully carried into effect, and never, at least, deliberately disregarded.

The love of God, it is true, must be grounded upon the knowledge of God, as he is, previously obtained; since nothing can be an object of love which is not in itself amiable; nor can be beloved by another, which is not known or supposed by him to be so. The love of God, then, is founded originally upon an experience of, and an acquaintance with, the amiable attributes of God; which are the most attractive parts of his nature, and the most delightful

[k] *Ὅθεν μοι δοκεῖ καλῶς εἰρῆσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐν δυσὶν ἐντολαῖς πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην καὶ εὐσέβειαν πληροῦσθαι. εἰσὶ δὲ αὗται, κ᾽. τ. λ. . . . ὁ γὰρ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεὸν, πλήρης θεοσεβοῦς γνώμης ὑπάρχων οὐδένα ἄλλον τιμήσει Θεόν . . . . καὶ ὁ τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπῶν, ἅπερ αὐτῷ βούλεται ἀγαθὰ, κἀκείνῳ βουλήσεται· οὐδεὶς δὲ ἑαυτῷ κακὰ βουλήσεται . . . πλησίον δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ τὸ ὁμοιοπαθὲς καὶ λογικὸν ζῶον, ὁ ἄνθρωπος. διχῇ οὖν τῆς πάσης δικαιοσύνης τετμημένης, πρός τε Θεὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπους, ὅστις, φησὶν ὁ λόγος, ἀγαπᾷ κύριον τὸν Θεὸν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος, καὶ τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν, δίκαιος ἀληθῶς ἂν εἴη.* Justin. M. Dialog. 342. 22.

and encouraging to his creatures, to contemplate. Such are the attributes of the Deity which become known to us and are appreciable by us, more from their sensible beneficial effects directly upon ourselves, than from any abstract reasonings or metaphysical inquiries, upon or into the divine nature; in the evidences of his goodness and benevolence, which are afforded by the works of his creation, the works of his providence and conservation; and more especially, by the work of redemption.

The love of God so produced, is necessarily accompanied by gratitude, as well as by the sense of duty and dependence; nor is it more conscious of the obligation, than animated and impelled by the disposition, to make every return in its power for benefits such as he bestows. Nor is it the less true, as the apostle affirms [1], that "perfect love casteth out "fear, because fear hath torment;" but love is incapable of torment. God is terrible as well as amiable; and the contemplation of his attributes of terror as naturally excites fear and uneasiness, as that of his attributes of love, affection and assurance. Divine love regards only the latter: and being capable of a willing and cheerful obedience of God, as well as of a just and becoming reverence of him, from the direct, spontaneous impulse of its nature, it does not require the motive of constraint or fear, to render to God his due: nor consequently can regard the *terrors* of the Lord, which may be necessary to compel the obedience of his enemies and haters, but are not wanted for his friends and lovers.

The love of God, however, is far from being inconsistent with a reverential dread of the power, the

[1] 1 John iv. 18.

majesty, the holiness of such a being, as the supreme God; no more than the love of parents, on the part of children, with the feeling of all proper respect and honour for parents. Filial reverence is a different thing from slavish fear. There can be no true affection between any persons, which is not grounded on mutual respect and esteem; and it was a maxim of Pythagoras that, as every man will naturally love himself the most, so he ought to stand in awe of himself most.

> Respect thyself—let nought more sacred seem,
> Nor more be reverenced, than thine own esteem.

In the relations between superior and inferior parties, the more amiable and worthy of attachment is the superior; the more sincere, devoted, and disinterested the feeling of attachment, on the part of the inferior; the more profound will be the sense of honour and reverence, which the latter will conceive and entertain towards the former; the more earnest will be his desire to please him; the more constant and more careful his dread of offending him, in any the least respect, whether by acts of commission, or acts of omission: and all this, without uneasiness or disquietude, because from a principle of affection, which is best pleased when employed on the service of the object of its love, and finds its own reward in the consciousness of his approbation and satisfaction.

When the second of the two commandments is produced as the substance of the social or relative duties, after the former indeed, but *next* to it, and with the remarkable declaration, that though but second in comparison of the first, it is *like* to it; it appears to be implied that, although the duties of the second table are in themselves inferior to those of

the first, (as in fact they must be, the one concerning God, the other merely his creatures,) yet the foundation of the obligation of those duties—that is, the foundation of moral obligation, properly so called—is nothing but the will of God, because nothing, ultimately, but the love of God. The will of God appoints and commands these duties, and makes them binding on the consciences of his creatures, towards each other; but the love of God ensures their performance, and disposes the hearts of his creatures to allow of their weight and obligation, in behalf of each other.

There is not indeed any true and solid foundation of what is called *moral obligation;* that is, of the necessity which renders it incumbent on any of God's moral creatures, to pursue *this* line of conduct rather than *that*, where both are equally possible, and equally within his power and choice, however different from each other; but the will and good pleasure of a common Creator, who has a right to prescribe what laws he pleases, and to exact whatsoever obedience he chooses from his own creatures and dependents; whether in respect of himself, or of themselves, or of their fellow creatures. The authority of human laws rests on no other principle, than a right to command on the one side, and a right to be obeyed on the other; nor does the authority of the divine laws differ from that of human, in the motive which gives each of them cogency as laws, the sense of the submission which is due from an inferior to the will of the superior—but in the extent of their jurisdiction—that the divine laws are binding on all mankind, human laws only on a part; and in the internal evidence of their force—that the

divine laws are recognised by the consciences of moral agents, human laws are for the most part positive and arbitrary—which were matters of indifference before they were enacted, and are not recognised when enacted, as binding on the conscience of the subjects, further than the deliberate conviction of the obedience which ought to be paid by subjects, to the declared will of their lawful governors and superiors, can make them so.

Moreover, to graft the love of man upon the love of God, or to deduce the former consequentially from the latter, is to graft it on the only vigorous and healthful stock; and is not merely to respect the claims of the nobler and superior party, in the first instance, as entitled to priority, but to extend the principle which produces that respect, to a like effect in a collateral and similar instance of its operation. The love of God must have a tendency to produce the love of man, on the mere principle of deference to his will in this particular instance of his declared wish and pleasure, as much as in any other; if it be true that he has commanded those who love himself, to love their brethren also. Upon the apostolical principle too[m]; if we profess to love God, as capable of loving him, whom we have not seen, and know only imperfectly through the reflected light of his works; much more must we be bound, because much more must we be able, to love our brother whom we have seen, and know as we know ourselves, through the sympathies of a common nature. It is possible then, to feel for our brother as we feel for ourselves, and to love our brother as

[m] John iv. 20.

we love ourselves; and that too, out of regard to our common relation to the same Creator, who has made both of us what we are; and therefore like each other.

It is a natural impulse and effect of the principle of love, as fixed on any object, that what we love we wish to resemble as much as possible, and to imitate as closely as we can. If then we truly love the God and Father of all, who is kind and beneficent to all, we shall be naturally inclined to be kind and beneficent to *his* creatures and *our* fellow-creatures, also; that we may prove how sincerely we love, and how much we desire to please him, by imitating that conduct with which he is best pleased himself, and of which he sets the example. Those too, whom we see to be beloved by the object of our affections, where his affections, as placed upon them, in nowise interfere with our own, as fixed upon him, it is natural, should be beloved by ourselves. The best way of rendering ourselves dear unto him, whose favour and affection we are most anxious to engage in our own behalf, is by testifying our regard and concern for those whom he holds dear to himself. If then we love God, and he loves all mankind, our first impulse, in seeking to please him, and to obtain his affection for ourselves, will be to love all mankind likewise. Do we love God as the common Father of all mankind? then are we bound to love all mankind as his children in common, and as our brethren in particular: just as the love which children naturally owe to their parents, and naturally render to them, in the first place, is the foundation of the mutual affection which they are expected to feel for, and to exhibit towards each other, in the next.

It may appear, at first sight, that the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, as thyself," are intended to define the obligation of the duty; and place the groundwork of the love of our neighbour upon a compulsory motive to the love of ourselves. But this is not the case. The words, *as* thyself, do not specify the principle of the duty in the abstract; but the rate, the degree, the ratio or measure of its application in practice. We are not commanded to love our neighbour *because* we love ourselves, whether in this or in that proportion; but we are commanded to love our neighbour *as* we love ourselves, just as much as we love ourselves—that so we may love him in such and such a proportion.

And this leads us to observe, that it is taken for granted we shall, and we must love ourselves; that there will, and there can be no need of any special precept to that effect; agreeably to the apostle's assertion, "That no man ever yet hated his own flesh," that is, himself[n]. The foundation, then, of the third class of duties—those which concern ourselves, and being added to the other two, make up the sum total of all that is due to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves; is laid in the constitution of our nature, and is identified with our instincts. Now the constitution of our nature in all its innate and innocent propensities, is the will of God; and it might easily be shewn that the basis of those duties which moral agents owe to themselves—the duties of sobriety, continence, self-preservation, and the like—is as much the love of God, because as much a regard and deference to the will of God, as the groundwork of

[n] Ephes. v. 29.

those which they owe to God himself or to their neighbour. It cannot be said that Christianity, in its peculiar motives to action, discards all reference to self; or considers it incompatible with the most refined and disinterested morality. On the contrary, it makes the kind and degree of our feelings towards ourselves, the proper standard of the conduct which we ought to pursue towards others; the sole, the absolute and authoritative measure of the degree of sympathy, which we ought to entertain for our fellow-creatures. Doubtless this is both to sanction the feeling of self-love, as right and proper in itself; and also to divest it of selfishness, properly so called —to make it social and comprehensive in the highest degree. The best man, in the evangelical view of goodness, is he who acts most regularly and invariably towards others, as he would wish others, in like circumstances, to act towards himself; and such an one, it will readily be admitted, in the judgment of an enlightened morality must be the most perfect and exemplary of social characters.

In fixing on the love of self, too, as the rule and measure of right in the discharge of external or social obligations, the morality of the gospel made choice of a standard, at once absolute and adequate. It is, what every practical rule should be, clear and simple—intelligible to the meanest capacity, and matter of instinct not of deduction: it is fixed and invariable, being liable to no exceptions and needing no corrections, according to circumstances, or the *difference* of cases, but being applicable alike to all cases. It is always at hand and ready for use; one, which we carry about with us, and as often as we want can instantly refer to. It is certain and infallible—never

except purposely, capable of misdirecting us, never except wilfully, capable of being mistaken by us[o].

[o] It has been made a ground of reflexion on the perfection of Christian morality, that it lays no stress upon the much cried up classical virtues of friendship and patriotism; or rather studiously keeps them out of sight. That it does so is undeniable; and that in doing so, it has acted wisely, and as was to be expected from its own character, might easily be shewn. I know not upon what foundation these two supposed virtues rest; what there is in the former, to distinguish it from selfishness; or in the latter, to make it stop short of the modern phantom, universal benevolence—the supposed sum and substance of virtue and morality. If we divest ourselves of prejudice, and contemplate these two virtues, stripped of the false glare in which they appear through the light of classical associations—judged of by their practical consequences, they deserve the name of splendid vices, instead of substantial good qualities. But the truth is, they are both too contracted for the noble scope of Christian principle—which absorbs every partial feeling in an expanded and comprehensive love of all mankind. It is peculiar to friendship, to transfer the affections of self to one; to patriotism, to a part of mankind; to Christian charity, if not in an equal degree, (for that is neither possible, nor incumbent to be done,) yet in their just relative proportion, to all. This teaches us to regard even enemies in some sense, as friends; strangers, as neighbours; every man, as a countryman. It represents all mankind as making up one large family, of which God is the common Father, every individual human being is a member, and all are brothers of each other.

"Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto;" is a sentiment which can possibly be felt as it ought, and acted upon as a ruling principle, only by a Christian.

The words, *ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου*—contain no redundancy of sentiment, as may at first sight appear to be the case. *Καρδία* being considered to denote the seat of the moral and nobler affections, and *ψυχὴ* of the animal or sensual; *ἰσχὺς* being understood of the bodily powers and faculties, and *διάνοια* of the intellectual; all together they describe

It was with singular propriety, that as interrogated by a Jew on each of these occasions, and when laying down the rule of duty as binding upon Jews, our Lord cited such terms or conditions of acceptance, as were professedly contained in their law. Whether, indeed, the Law either actually or virtually held out the promise of eternal life, on such and such conditions, is a question we need not enter into. It is sufficient to know, that with a view to whatever personal result, it required unqualified obedience and absolute perfection, from those who by the covenant of works were subjected to it; it demanded every thing on their part, or it would bestow nothing on its own. "Do this, and thou shalt "live," was the substance of its stipulations and its promises[p]; as "Do this, and thou shalt live," is the language of our Saviour's reference to each of them.

the complex of human nature, in the integrity, yet the severalty, of its component parts. And all these being to be devoted to God, the tenor of the precept is to inculcate a sublime morality, peculiar to the Law and the Gospel: that which St. Paul expresses by our λογικὴ θεραπεία, the presentation both of soul and body, as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable and well-pleasing, to our God and Maker. Such a consecration would extend to the meanest, as well as the highest functions of our being: sanctifying all and elevating all, as acts of religious adoration, of homage and duty, on the part of the creature towards its proper Creator; so that whether we ate or drank, or whatever we did, we should do all as his creatures, and as in obedience to his will and appointment, and therefore for his glory—who made us. What would this be, but to make the whole of existence a perpetual office of praise or prayer; every spot a temple; every man a priest; every act of life, whether within or without, whether in thought, word, or work, a sacrifice?

[p] "And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judg-"ments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them." Ezek. xx. 11.

But experience must have taught the conscientious and reflecting Jew, that though the law might require such an impeccable obedience from him, it was far beyond his power to render it. Hence, if the condition on which the promises of the law, whatsoever they were, depended, became void, the promises were rendered void also. Nor did the law require a *general* obedience merely, but a *particular* one; nor an obedience in greater matters, with a considerate indulgence for possible disobedience in smaller; but whosoever should keep the rest of its injunctions, however well, yet offend only in one the least respect, it held him to be guilty of all[q]. In whatever proportion, then, a subject of the law fell short of the absolute standard of the obedience required by it; he not only fell short of the reward appropriated to perfection, but became liable to the punishment denounced against a total neglect, or repeated transgressions of duty.

Instead, then, of the pleasing prospect of a ready—assured acceptance with God, what had the Jew to look for, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment to come, tempered by nothing but the possible, though uncertain, hope of the mercy and free grace of God? "In many things we offend all," would be his daily conviction; and "If thou, Lord! should-" "est be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who "may abide it?" his daily confession. Now this was that state of the conscience, to which the Law was intended to conduct, preparatory to the manifestation of the Gospel; this was that practical dilemma, by reducing its subjects to which, it was truly their

[q] James ii. 10.

" schoolmaster to bring them to Christ." The merit of an imputed righteousness is the only expedient left to supply the defect of obedience and consequent perfection, on their part, who have been tried, and found incompetent to attain to righteousness of themselves. Salvation by faith in the blood of Christ, freely and unconditionally proposed, was the only means under such circumstances, for restoring the transgressor of a just and holy commandment, to favour with God, and peace with himself; making him easy about the past, and for giving him confidence about the future. Such an offer would need no recommendation but the sense of that utter hopelessness, to which those were conscious of having been reduced, who had previously been forced to trust to, and depend upon themselves. Thus was the covenant of works a most necessary and effectual discipline, preparatory to the covenant of grace —to which even those moral agents required to be beforehand subjected, who should one day be relieved from it by the covenant of grace, if they must be taught the value and magnitude of the blessing in reserve for them, and must be induced to welcome it as it deserved, when offered unto them. Without first tasting of the bitterness of legal bondage, the sweets of gospel liberty would not have been relished, as they ought. Had not men been experimentally made sensible of their inability to save themselves, what should have convinced them of the necessity of a Saviour and deliverer, independent of themselves? what should have taught them to greet the offer of salvation through faith, with joy and gratitude, with eagerness and impatience—as the thing most needed in

their situation; as the greatest of favours which could be proposed to their acceptance[r]?

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

The propriety of replying to the question, Who is my neighbour? by a parable, rather than by a definition, or in any other direct way, was alluded to before. Two things are certain; that our Saviour neither satisfied the doubts of the inquirer in the present instance, by a simple, general answer

[r] When the young ruler, who put the question to our Saviour on the second of the occasions which we have considered, declared to him that he had kept *all those* things, (meaning the substance of those two commandments,) from his youth up; we cannot understand the assertion of more than a sincere *wish* and *endeavour* to keep them: of his *actual* success in keeping them, perhaps the words afford no proof. Besides, most of the particulars just before recited, were rather *negative* than *positive* duties; rather such things as were to be avoided, than such things as were to be done. Now it is one thing not to be vicious; and another to be virtuous. A man may never have been guilty of positive crimes, and yet not be remarkable for particular goodness. For this reason, the word *ἐφυλαξάμην*, in the observations of the young man, ought rather to be rendered, "I have guarded "myself from; I have abstained from; I have avoided;" (which is its proper sense;) than, "I have kept"—which would have required *ἐφύλαξα*. But in any case, our Saviour who best knew the extent of his performances, and the degree of his proficiency, shews plainly by his reply to him, that he was not yet *perfect;* that something was still necessary to make him so: which something was to part with his temporal possessions for the sake of Christ; to give them to the poor, and to trust to be rewarded in heaven; to take up the *cross,* and to follow *him.* Alas, for poor human nature! these seem to be conditions much within the power of an aspirant after perfection, and readily to have been complied with. Yet they were more than *he* could bring himself to submit to, who had just boasted that he had never fallen short of legal righteousness.

to his question, though such might evidently have been returned; nor yet subjoined the moral of his own example, but left the interrogator to draw it himself, and so to answer his own question.

Upon questions of practice, a well-chosen case in point does more to illustrate the rule of duty, and to explain the line of conduct to be pursued under the necessary circumstances, than any general and abstract statement. An example bears to a precept the same sort of relation, as a picture to a description. Both the former convey clearer and stronger conceptions of the particular idea which is desired to be impressed, than the latter. The meaning of an action cannot be mistaken, nor the inference to which it leads, evaded. An example, considered as a matter of fact, supplies premises which have the force of necessity, and suggests conclusions which come with the power of a demonstration. General principles, to be rendered available as rules of conduct, would still require to be specially applied in particular cases; and in making that application of them, there would be room for both intentional and unintentional confusion and mistake. A single instance, on the ground of analogy or the argument *a pari*, may be abundantly sufficient to serve as a specimen of every other case of like kind with itself: while, for the practical end and purpose designed by all such illustrations in common, it is best that the principle which applies to the class of these cases in general, should be inferred from the one instance adduced, which both ascertains its truth, and shews its application. The abstract principle is thus inculcated, and its practical operation is shewn at the same time; and while the former

is most distinctly conveyed to the understanding, the latter is not less forcibly recommended to imitation; and that too from the most engaging and persuasive of motives, the sensible experience of its good and beneficial effects.

The conclusions which we draw for ourselves, are generally the most agreeable to our self love; the most convincing, and the most likely to be remembered. Few minds would be willing to receive instruction, with an absolute submission of their own judgment or understanding, to that of another person. Their pride would be offended at seeming to be so treated, as if they were incapable of thinking or reasoning in any degree for themselves. This prejudice is removed, when a certain deference appears to be shewn to their own opinions. The same degree of information may be communicated to them, and they may be just as much indebted to another for it, in this case, as in any other; but the mode of the communication makes the discovery of the truth in some measure their own, and therefore finds them more favourably disposed to receive it, and more likely permanently to cherish it. They are taught and instructed all the while; but not so, as to be made too sensible of their obligations to their teacher.

If there was any disinclination on the part of the inquirer, or though there might be none in him, if there was a repugnance on the part of others, who might be present at the conversation, to receive the truth on such a question as this, if plainly stated—if it would have shocked the force of ancient prejudice, and done violence to feelings and opinions, long cherished, to be told openly that

every one was a neighbour, who was a man, every one was entitled to the good offices entailed by that relation, who stood in need of them—it was more in unison with the practice of skilful disputants, when they have to do with adversaries prepossessed against a particular conclusion, to lead them if possible to it, in spite of themselves; to place it before them in the shape of a conclusion from premises which they cannot dispute, and yet which force it irresistibly upon them; from which they cannot withhold the inference, if they would. And it was certainly more agreeable to the kindness and condescension of our Saviour's manner, in removing scruples however needless, and in overcoming prejudices however unreasonable, to proceed gently and imperceptibly, in convincing his hearers of their errors; to insinuate, rather than to obtrude, the necessary correction; and to make them conscious of the delusions they had so long laboured under, as well as ashamed of them, before they were even aware of his intention to expose, and of his wish to remove them.

Now, was it expedient that the answer to the proposed question should be couched in the form of an example; it was just as necessary that the instance adduced should be a real, and not a fictitious case in point. It is not enough to say, that an actual matter of fact would have been *best* adapted for the desired effect; we ought rather to say, that none else would have been adapted to it *at all.* Nor is it sufficient to reply, that the moral proposed by the example is a real, practical truth, whatever be the nature of the example which supplies it. The propriety of that moral, the force of that practical

conclusion, turn upon the reality of the history itself. Admit this reality, and the inference from the history is sound and just; deny it, and the inference falls to the ground.

The opposite conduct of two very different kinds of persons, under circumstances exactly the same, and equally favourable or unfavourable to the exercise of a certain duty, is proposed as alike instructive upon a question of serious practical obligation; and as alike effectual in illustrating the principle and rule of duty, applicable to all such cases; the one by shewing what ought not to be done, the other by shewing what ought to be done, under such circumstances; the one as a case in point to the omission of the duty, the other as a case in point to its observance; the one consequently just as striking and impressive in a *negative*, as the other in a *positive* point of view, both to make known the duty and to enforce it. Such a contrast of personal character, and difference of personal conduct, under the circumstances of the case, seem of necessity to require that each should be considered equally real: for if either is fictitious, the other must be so too; and neither, if fictitious, would justify the inference, with a view to the general moral, founded on that part of the story in particular. The example of the priest and Levite would prove nothing by way of warning, dissuasive, or discouragement, any more than that of the Samaritan by way of incitement, persuasive, or encouragement, upon the practical question at issue—if neither of them ever happened. Nor is it probable that a statement of the case so unfavourable to the Jew, and so creditable to the Samaritan, would be made by the speaker on the

one side, and implicitly received by the hearer on the other, were it not known or believed by both, to be founded in fact. For it is evident that our Lord affirms, and the person with whom he is conversing assents to, the fact of this supposed behaviour, as alike unquestionable and real, with respect to each of the parties concerned in the transaction.

In the form and manner of the narrative as it stands, without regard to the further question whether it is real or fictitious, we have a remarkable example of the candour and decorum which characterise our Saviour's representations of things and persons. Every one who peruses the description of the conduct of the priest and Levite, feels disposed spontaneously to condemn and reprobate it: and when he reads of the opposite behaviour of the Samaritan, is just as spontaneously impelled to admire and applaud it. But the parable itself is alike dispassionate and impartial, in the relation of each; alike neutral in point of feeling towards each. It neither passes its censure, however deserved, nor bestows its praise, however just; but content to perform the part of the simple historian, attentive only to truth, and the statement of actual facts, leaves it to the judgment and natural sympathies of the reader, to draw the proper inference from the narrative, according to the merits of the case; and to collect the distinct personal character of the agents from the difference of conduct, which under the same circumstances of situation, the difference of personal principles and motives respectively, induces them to pursue.

The use we may make of this property of the narrative, is as follows. If the parable contains a

real history, such a mode of relating its particulars is consistent with the hypothesis of its reality; but if it contains a fiction, the spirit of candour and strict justice which pervades the narration, is not to be reconciled with the nature of its original conception. It is not consistent to relate the details of a certain story, with every attention to tenderness, delicacy, decorum, or the like; when the story itself, taken as a whole, rests on a basis which is purely fictitious, yet disingenuous and uncharitable. Why should the inhumanity of a priest or a Levite, in a particular instance, be described without note or comment to stigmatise, much more to aggravate, its insensibility; if the supposition of that inhumanity is a gratuitous assumption, yet so disparaging to the priest and the Levite generally?—that is, to the ministers of religion—concerning whom, of all persons, the fact of such a supposition ought, *a priori*, to be the least conceivable. The mention even of a *certain* priest and a *certain* Levite, with nothing more definite to ascertain the *individuals* in each instance—on the supposition that the parable is a narrative of facts—is a further argument of its delicacy and considerateness. But on the contrary supposition, its very indefiniteness makes it the more objectionable; because instead of confining the odium of a certain disgraceful action to its proper authors, who though members of the priesthood, and unworthy members also, were still but *two* of a much larger body, it reflects the discredit of their particular conduct upon the whole body to which they belong; it leads to the inference that *any* priest, or *any* Levite, was just as capable of acting in the given way, as these *two* were.

It must be confessed that the circumstances of the parable are all such, as render it highly probable that the whole transaction was real. The scene of the narrative, in the event of which *travellers* of one sort or another are exclusively concerned, is laid on what is known to have been as great a thoroughfare as any in Judæa—the high road between Jerusalem and Jericho. The road itself, for the greater part of its extent, passed through rocks and defiles, sloping from the high ground on which Jerusalem stood, to the verge of the plain of the Jordan in which Jericho was situated. Hence a very appropriate term, καταβαίνειν; "to go down;" all as used of them, in describing the direction of a journey which set out from the first of these points, to go to the other.

The road in question was liable to be infested by what are called in the original λῃσταὶ, persons who lived by freebooting—a very different description of men from mere thieves—and properly denoting robbers or banditti: with respect to whom it would be easy to shew, upon the testimony of contemporary history, that they abounded in various parts of Judæa, from the time of Herod the Great to the destruction of Jerusalem; and were both numerous, and strong and hardy, enough to set the civil government at defiance, and to wage war upon the peaceable inhabitants of the country with impunity. To these outlaws and their families, the natural fastnesses and caverns in the mountains, assisted and strengthened by their own labours and precautions, afforded an asylum; and the means both of shelter and self-defence. It was not extraordinary then, for a traveller by the road from Jerusalem to Je-

richo, to meet with the misfortune of falling in with some of these robbers: nor if he did, to suffer such usage at their hands, as is supposed to befall the wayfaring man in the parable. The frequency of these accidents was such as to make this high-road infamous for robberies, violence, and murder. Josephus, I believe, informs us, it passed proverbially in his time by the name of the *bloody* road [s]; so that unless people were well armed and travelled in bodies, it could scarcely be passed with safety. Jerome, who by his personal residence at Bethlehem in Judæa, was well acquainted with the vicinity of Jerusalem, tells us it retained its old character in his time; being infested by bands of Arabian, if not of native robbers, and being as infamous for bloodshed and violence as ever [t].

If there is any circumstance in the account, which at first sight appears improbable; perhaps it is the particular coincidence that brought a priest and a Levite, and afterwards a Samaritan, to the spot where the unfortunate traveller was lying, time enough to afford him relief; which must necessarily have been soon after he came to require it. But this coincidence is attributed to what is ordinarily called *chance*, (κατὰ συγκυρίαν): and chance, as it will

[s] Adommim, quondam villula nunc ruinæ in sorte tribus Judæ, qui locus usque hodie vocatur Maledomim: [et Græce dicitur ἀνάβασις πύῤῥων: Latine autem appellari potest, ascensus rufforum sive rubentium, propter sanguinem qui illic crebro a latronibus funditur: est autem confinium tribus Judæ et Benjamin] descendentibus ab Ælia Jerichum, ubi et castellum militum situm est [ob auxilia viatorum.] Hujus cruenti et sanguinarii loci, Dominus quoque in parabola descendentis Jerichum de Hierosolyma, recordatur. Hieronym. De nominibus et locis sanctis.

[t] III. 541. *ad calc.* in Jerem. iii.

be allowed, might account for a more extraordinary combination of circumstances than this. The three parties, the traveller, the priest, and the Levite, were all journeying by the same road, and in the same direction; and therefore must pass by the same localities in general, and might do so not very long after each other [u]. All these three individuals, or if not the wounded man, yet the priest and the Levite in particular, might have been up to Jerusalem to attend some solemnity in common, or the latter two, to officiate in the weekly order of their course; and might be now returning to their own homes, at Jericho or any where else, provided the road thither lay through Jericho.

As to the Samaritan, it is not said whether he was journeying *to* Jericho, or *from* it; nor is it material, which he was doing. It suffices to know that he was travelling on his own business; on a road which was the principal thoroughfare, and most general line of communication, between the metropolis of Judæa, and other parts of the country; especially that part of it called Peræa, or beyond Jordan. Had he been there, or was he journeying thither, the usual road for travellers to take, even between his own country and that part, might have required him to be on the

[u] The language of the original supposes that the priest was in the same way, journeying or going down, at the very time when the misfortune happened to the traveller; though he did not come to the spot where the robbers had left him, until after that occurrence. Now this was very possible; for the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was an ordinary day's journey in length; and many things might pass and be over, in some parts of it, affecting those who were on it there—which others who were in a different and a distant part of it, could know nothing about, till they came to the spot.

highway to or from Jericho, when accident brought him to the spot, where the wounded man lay, in time to relieve his distress.

With regard indeed, to the most material circumstance of all, as connected with the moral of the story, the difference of the conduct attributed to the three parties respectively; we may admit that antecedent probability was in favour of the reverse of the actual state of the case; that a Priest or a Levite was more likely to have granted, and a Samaritan to have withheld, the relief in question. But the moral effect of the narrative turns altogether on the disappointment of this antecedent presumption, reasonable as it is; and it may still be shewn that under the circumstances of their situation, the act of the Priest and the Levite could scarcely fail to take place. In the mean time, if we only believe it to be real; we have nothing to do with its propriety, or its probability, beforehand. It must be admitted to be matter of fact.

Nor is it any objection to this supposition, that if the parable contains the history of an actual event, it shews our Lord to have been acquainted with a transaction which passed, apparently, in secret. There is many a good, as well as many an evil deed, performed in private or with very few witnesses, yet nevertheless equally well known to God; whose eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good. Nor is it more extraordinary that our Saviour should have shewn himself acquainted with the unobserved actions of men, than with their secret thoughts; which he often did: nor that he should have been aware of the particulars of their past conduct, however private, than

of their future behaviour, though still to come: which is equally true of him [x].

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, MORAL, AND APPLICATION.

The circumstances of the parabolic history are so few and simple, that what has been said might almost suffice in explanation of them. If any thing more remains to be observed on the same subject, it will find a place under the consideration of the moral of the narrative, and its application. With respect however to this moral, we may premise, that the parable is capable of one construction, regarded as an independent narrative, yet possessing an use and meaning derived from itself; and of another, considered as returning an answer to the question, Who is my neighbour? For the rest of our remarks upon it, we shall regard it in each of these points of view.

It is not distinctly stated that the man who fell among robbers, and whose subsequent treatment at the hands of the different parties equally quali-

[x] Dr. Paley has observed upon the parable, that it could be the composition of none but a man of humanity. He made the remark, conceiving it to contain a fictitious representation. But the proof which it supplies of our Saviour's habitual benevolence, is equally strong, if we suppose it to contain a reality. The selection of the instance by which he thought proper to inculcate the moral of universal charity, was his; and the manner of narrating it was peculiarly his; the one, as perfect an example of the tendencies and effect of the principle itself, as could have been produced; the other, as lively and touching, as simple and exquisite a description of its mode of operation, as could have been given, to do justice to it, consistently both with nature and the truth of history.

fied to have given him relief, is the subject of the history, was a Jew; yet it is strongly implied that he was, and it is absolutely necessary to the moral effect of the transaction, that we should consider him to have been so. The contrast of the difference of conduct, under the sameness of circumstances, which forms the point of the parable, turns upon this anomaly; that Jews are seen to withhold relief from the very person, under circumstances of the most urgent need, to whom a Samaritan, placed in the same situation as they, is seen to extend it. This person therefore, must be regarded as a Jew. There would have been nothing extraordinary in the fact of Jews' shewing kindness to a Jew; or of a Samaritan's shewing kindness to a Samaritan: any more, than in Jews' being seen to relieve a countryman of their own, and a Samaritan's having refused to do so. It would not have been more than otherwise was to be expected—had Jews been represented even as willing to relieve a Samaritan, knowing him to be such; while his own countryman as knowingly might have left him to perish. But that Jews, not to say a Priest and a Levite among the Jews—should be the persons to refuse, and a Samaritan the party to give relief to a Jew in distress and in urgent need of relief, was something beforehand improbable, and in the event surprising; which therefore, we cannot doubt that the history intended purposely to bring forward and to represent.

Besides which, as the traveller in the parable had set out from Jerusalem, and was going to Jericho, when he met with his misfortune; he was probably a native of one or other of those places. Perhaps, not only he, but the Priest and the Levite,

though personally strangers to each other, were inhabitants of Jericho; who having been up to Jerusalem on a common occasion of recent occurrence, might be returning in common to their ordinary place of abode. I need not observe that, in this case, besides the general relation of fellow-countrymen, between them and the wounded man, the particular relation of neighbours also, properly so called, would be superinduced. The person in distress, had he been known for what he was, would have had not only that general claim on their sympathy, which any Jew might have had upon another; but the special one, which in the strictest and narrowest acceptation of the term, one neighbour among the Jews, according to the precept of the law, would have had upon another, in the same capacity.

We must not, however, ascribe the behaviour either of the Priest or of the Levite, to a motive which will not be borne out by the circumstances of the case; much less, without corroboration from those circumstances, to a motive which will make it appear worse than it really was. We must not attribute it, therefore, to the principle of sheer inhumanity—as if they acted from a total absence of feeling; from a total insensibility to the spectacle of suffering before them. Simple inhumanity is an habit of mind, which would not explain the fact of an apparent indifference to distress, in a particular instance; but would be incompatible with the fact of sympathy at all, and with the exercise of compassion under any circumstances. It would be no aggravation of a criminal act—consisting in withholding relief from a proper object—but

would be a worse offence than that act itself. It would not make it surprising that the party in fault had behaved as he did—if by that is implied that he might, as well as that he ought to have behaved otherwise; for it would make him incapable of behaving differently at all. Inhumanity, as the spring or principle which determines the conduct where the question is the doing of good gratuitously to others—because *they* want it and the *agent* is able to confer it—can respect no claims, nor attend to any distinctions. It can consider no one relation as closer than another, no one obligation as more sacred than another. It could not discriminate between friends or enemies, neighbours or strangers, countrymen or aliens: but it would be incapable of sympathy with any, and deaf to the voice of nature and the intercessions of pity towards any—because equally indifferent to all, and equally careless of all.

It is not easy, indeed, to conceive that any one, not totally brutalized by insensibility, could look on the spectacle which the parable describes in its own simple, but pathetic manner; and not be affected by it. What? was the sight of a naked, a mangled, a bleeding, an exposed and deserted corpse, apparently in the last stage of existence, to be contemplated by one who possessed but the common feelings of mankind, without horror, and without emotion? Is there no eloquence in the voice of groans? no touching or thrilling faculty in the visible agonies of bodily pain? Are there no bowels of compassion, no yearnings of natural affection in one man towards another, which draw him instinctively to sympathize with suffering, and as

instinctively to seek to relieve it? Or must a Priest and a Levite—that is, the ministers of religion in particular—be considered destitute of that which is no more than the ordinary privilege of humanity? Must these alone be insensible to emotion, where none, without a crime, could be incapable of feeling? Must these alone be predetermined to deny the claims of one human being on another, and to refuse that tribute of personal commiseration, in a case like this, which none could have been acquitted of owing, or excused from rendering—who merely bore the form, and partook of the nature, of a man?

The first act which the narrative ascribes to each of them, upon their approaching to the spot where the wounded person lay, is apparently an act of compassion. They turn aside—out of their proper direction—to look upon him; which so far indicates a disposition to afford him relief. The next is an act of aversion—of strong and decided aversion. They recede from the spot where he lay, and pass away: nor simply pass away, but at the greatest possible distance from him which the limits of the road would permit: they pass away on the other side. Between these two acts, then, something must have intervened, to stifle the feeling of compassion in its birth; and to convert an impulse of kindness, into a sensation of abhorrence and aversion. Now, what could this be, but the examination of the body, and the reflections excited by that spectacle? Nothing else could have taken place, or is implied to have taken place, between the acts in question. But the state of the sufferer at the time, and the reflections which might naturally arise in the mind of the Priest and of the Levite, from the view and observation of his

situation, were such and so connected, as to be capable of accounting for the anomaly between their apparent feelings up to a certain time, and their actual conduct afterwards.

As ministers of religion, possessing the same official character, the Priest and the Levite might so far agree together; but as personally distinct individuals, and as acting without concert in the present instance, the conduct of each must have been impelled by a principle and motive of its own. It is not, therefore probable, that two such individuals, independent of each other, would have agreed in the same personal act, except from the same personal feelings; nor yet that those personal feelings would have been the same in each, unless each had been equally predisposed to feel them, and unless there was something in the case before them, naturally calculated to excite them in each. I contend, then, that the conduct of neither is to be accounted for, except on the principle of antecedent prejudice, combined with an ignorance in the particular case: of prejudice against all but Jews, beforehand; with an ignorance that the individual who required their relief in this instance, was a Jew; a prejudice, under which each might previously have laboured alike; and an ignorance, to which each, at the time, would necessarily be liable alike.

With regard to the first of these assertions—not content to limit the sense of the word *neighbour*, specially to Jews; and consequently the positive obligation of the duties of humanity, fellowfeeling, charity, beneficence, as binding upon neighbours in behalf of neighbours, to such acts as respected their countrymen; the Jews of this day were disposed

to deny the name of neighbours in any sense to persons of a different nation, and actually to forbid the interchange of good offices with them. Even Philo Judæus, though an humane and enlightened writer, restricts the obligation of the legal precept, "Thou "shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," to the treatment of the ἐπήλυδες, the strangers or proselytes, who were settled among the Jews[y], and it is manifest, were only one degree removed from *their* brethren according to the flesh. As to the Jews at large, it was as much a point of conscience with them to withhold their good offices from Gentiles, as to communicate them to Jews; both being known to be such. Proofs of the estimation in which the Gentiles were held by them, as compared with themselves, are supplied by the New Testament itself, in abundance[z]. To hold familiar communication with one of an heathen nation; much more that free and unreserved communication, which is implied in the mutual exchange of acts of friendship and neighbourly kindness, was considered a pollution, and carefully to be avoided. Nor did any part of the Jewish character contribute to prejudice the Greeks and Romans against them, more than this well-known trait; so repulsive, so unsociable, and so repugnant to the first and commonest principles of humanity, as it seemed[a].

[y] Operum. ii. 392. 21—40.

[z] Matt. x. 5: xviii. 17: John xviii. 29: Acts x. 28: xi. 3: xxii. 21, 22: Galat. ii. 12, 13, &c. &c.

[a] Hence the remark of Tacitus, Hist. v. 5: Et, quia apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promtu, sed adversus omnes alios hostile odium, &c. And Juvenal's well-known lines;

> Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges,
> Judaïcum ediscunt, et servant. et metuunt jus,

With regard to the second—the ignorance in question was a necessary consequence of the circumstances of the case. The man was naked; for the robbers had stripped him of his clothing: he could not, therefore, be known from his dress, though that at any other time, might have served to distinguish him[b]. He was speechless; for he had been left covered with wounds, and half dead: a state of dereliction at first, necessarily aggravated subsequently by the loss of blood—by continued exposure to the cold—by the increase of exhaustion, with the prolongation of suffering, and the gradual decay of strength. He could not therefore declare who, or what he was, for himself. But if he was neither to be recognised by his dress, nor able to speak for himself; how was the Priest or the Levite to discover that he was a Jew? Unless they were previously acquainted with him personally, (a supposition for which there is not the least reason in the narrative,) they could have no means of ascertaining what he was, except from the garb which he wore, or from his own declarations.

How were they then, to know that he might not be a Gentile, a robber, a Samaritan? The place—the neighbourhood—the condition of the man himself—were such as might favour the most sinister interpretation. Or, were there only a confessed un-

> Tradidit arcano quodcunque volumine Moyses,
> Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti;
> Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.
>
> Sat. xiv. 100.

[b] The fringe or border which every Jew wore, by command of the law, would of course alone serve to discriminate a Jew as such, from one who was not of the same nation.

certainty what he actually was, and just as great a probability that he was one of an hated sect or nation, as not; there would be room enough for suspicion to produce its effect; and matter enough for prejudice to work upon, in their minds—supplied by the case before them.

The conduct of both the parties, accordingly, is such as dispassionately considered, seems to be the behaviour of men actuated by horror and abomination, rather than by insensibility. They make haste to be gone, as if afraid to linger on an accursed spot. They get to as great a distance as possible from the expiring man; as if to approach him too nearly would entail the risk of pollution. The very air in his neighbourhood might be infected. To remain near the body of the sufferer; much more to handle it, for the purpose of administering relief—to lift it up—to bind up its wounds—to pour in oil and wine—might, in their estimation, be a forbidden and a dangerous thing.

The Samaritan, too, would probably have prejudices of a similar kind, to contend against beforehand, as well as these two Jews; for we cannot suppose him a particular exception to what was only the common failing of his age and nation. Ill-will has a tendency to produce ill-will; and bad treatment systematically adopted, on one side, is sure to provoke a spirit of retaliation, on the other. In this warfare of feeling between the Jews and the Samaritans, which of the parties set the first example; which were more to blame; which were the most confirmed and bigoted in the indulgence of such prejudices; it is not necessary to inquire, as both nations partook in them alike: and if ordinarily speaking, the Jew would

have no dealings with the Samaritan, the Samaritan on the other hand, would not willingly give even a cup of cold water to the Jew [c].

[c] See John iv. 9: Luke ix. 51—56. The intensity of rancour and hatred, which the Jews at large must be conceived to have felt towards the Samaritans, may be conjectured, when even such a person as the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, in whose writings so many noble and truly evangelical sentiments of humanity, occur, could write thus of the Samaritans. "There are two manner of nations which my "heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation; they that sit "upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among "the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sichem." Eccles. l. 25, 26.

The national antipathy between the Jews and the Samaritans, must be traced back to the time immediately after the return from the captivity—in the successful opposition of the latter to the rebuilding of the temple, in the reign of Cambyses; in their attempts to hinder and frustrate the patriotic enterprises of Nehemiah—Add to this, the establishment of the rival temple on Gerizim, in the reign of Alexander the Great; the jealousy and bitterness occasioned by this rivalship of religions, subsisting in the reigns of the Ptolemies; (of which Josephus supplies a luminous instance in the reign of Ptolemy Philometor; when deputies were appointed to argue the respective claims of the two places of worship, and of the two forms of religious polity, before the king of Egypt, on the part both of the Jews and of the Samaritans; a discussion which ended in the discomfiture and death of the latter;) the behaviour of the Samaritans to the Jews in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes: John Hyrcanus, the fourth of the Maccabæan princes' reduction of them, and his destruction of the temple on Gerizim: besides diverse instances of wanton acts of insult and outrage either against the religion or against the nation of the Jews, committed by the Samaritans in aftertimes: of which Josephus has preserved the accounts.

Maimonides, De Ratione Intercalandi, (iii. 8.) mentions, that while the custom of notifying the appearance of the new moons by lighting beacons on the tops of the hills, continued to

The Samaritan, too, must have been liable to the same ignorance in the present instance, of the nation of the individual sufferer who stood in need of his good offices, as the Priest and the Levite. He could not know any more than they, whether the assistance which he was about to render him, would be a favour conferred on a friend or on an enemy; on a countryman or on an alien. But it is to this very circumstance, that the singularity of the contrast between his behaviour and theirs, is due; and herein consists his peculiar excellence, that placed in the same situation as they, and liable to the influence of the same motives as they, which might have stifled the first impulse of pity as readily in him as in them; he yet acts so differently, and so much better. Humanity with him was stronger than prejudice; and natural sympathy overcame and silenced doubt. He stopped not to reflect who the individual before him was, or to conjecture every thing that he might possibly be: he paused to consider only in what a situation he was; and how he himself might best be enabled to relieve it: a situation, on the one hand, to require prompt and immediate assistance; and an ability on the other, seconded by the disposition, as promptly and readily to afford it.

The moral of such a narrative, as this, considered in respect to the conclusion which it leads to of itself, must therefore be, to shew, by a case in point,

be kept up among the Jews; the Samaritans would often light such fires at wrong times, on purpose to mislead them, and to make them begin their computation of the neomeniæ too soon. This occurred so frequently, that it compelled the Jews to abandon the practice, and to adopt a different method of making known the appearance of the same natural phenomenon.

the triumph of prejudice over humanity, in one instance, and the triumph of humanity over prejudice, in another, under circumstances exactly the same beforehand, for the victory of humanity over prejudice, or for that of prejudice over humanity. The former of these results is exemplified in the influence of prejudice with the Priest and the Levite; the latter in the power of humanity over the honest and good Samaritan.

If, however, both the Priest and the Levite in acting as they did, must be supposed to have acted upon a sense and persuasion of duty, though a mistaken one; it is but right to conclude that the Samaritan also was actuated by a principle of conviction; though much more rational, and much more correct. It is scarcely probable that prejudice had struck root deeply into an heart, which yielded so readily to the spontaneous impulse of compassion; nor that pity, so pure, so disinterested, was under the guidance of a principle less noble, or less sacred than that of duty. This prompt and considerate benefactor of one poor and helpless fellow-creature, could have cherished no enmity against mankind, or any comprehensive division of mankind, in general. No malicious and vindictive passion could have found an habitual asylum in that breast, which like a temple of charity, was consecrated to the generous affections, and overflowed with the milk of human kindness. Nor would it, perhaps, be presuming too much on consistency of character in the same person, and on the uniformity of influence which is to be expected from the identity of principle, extending itself with equal activity to all the emergencies of private or social duty—disposing to the observance

of each, and qualifying for the observance of each; were we to conclude from the precise nature of this Samaritan's behaviour in the present instance, that he was a *good* man in the general sense of the word, and exemplary in the discharge of his other duties, as well as in that of feeling for distress, and sympathizing with a fellow-creature in need of relief: that we see in this benefactor of one poor Jew, a pious worshipper of God, an affectionate husband, a tender father, a faithful friend, a gentle master, a peaceful and obedient subject, a kind and benevolent neighbour.

In the description of his conduct, which takes up the sequel of the narrative, we have a lively illustration both of the passive impression which is wont to be produced on the sympathies of a common nature, by the sight of an object of distress, and of the active tendency, which is naturally the result of that impression, to seek to relieve the suffering which causes it. The Samaritan was moved with pity, on drawing near and beholding the situation of the wounded man; and to be touched with a sense of compassion, under such circumstances, was a spontaneous effect, which no one could help experiencing, who possessed but the common susceptibility of emotion, implanted in the constitution of human nature. His next impulse was to set about to relieve him; and the first natural effect even of the *passive* impression of sympathy, is *active*—prompting directly to the removal of the distress which produces it—though not less, perhaps, for the sake of the subject, than for that of the object of the sympathy: for the passive emotion of pity, under such circumstances, is painful and disagreeable; nor can that painful-

ness and disagreeableness be relieved, except with the removal of the causes which excite them; that is, except with the removal or mitigation of the distress.

To give effect, however, to the active tendencies of the passive emotion, requires the voluntary co-operation of the subject himself. It is as easy to stifle the impulse of pity, as to second and cherish it; and to get rid of the painfulness of the first impression, by turning away from the sight of the misery or suffering which produces it, as by endeavouring to afford it relief. The effects of the Samaritan's compassion were not the mere impulse of natural sympathy with distress; nor were the steps which he took to give his feelings vent, the efforts of one who desired to relieve himself, as quickly as possible, from a mere disagreeable sensation. Such a compassion must have been partial and transient; active indeed while it lasted, but liable to be speedily exhausted; spending itself on its first exertions, and dying away again as soon as born: whereas his was steady and permanent, and still as vigorous and elastic as ever, when the cause which originally produced it (were that any thing but the principle of duty, and the confirmed habit of benevolence itself) must long have ceased to operate.

He forgets, while intent on his charitable work in behalf of a suffering fellow-creature—the danger, to which his personal safety was exposed, by continuing to linger in such a vicinity as this: a danger, of which the spectacle before him would have been a sufficient warning to any whose personal safety, and not the necessities of another in distress, was his first consideration. He forgets too the urgency

of his own affairs, which perhaps might not admit of delay—while absorbed in the duties of humanity. He expends on the wounded man the oil and wine, doubtless provided for the necessities of his own journey; and if we cannot suppose, that after binding up his wounds and embalming his body, he would leave him as naked and exposed to the cold as before—he must have supplied him with clothing, as well as medicines, from his own stores. When he has restored him to some degree of strength, by this previous, judicious administration of the kind of relief which his situation most required—he places him on his own beast, and walks beside him on foot himself—not ashamed to appear and to act as his servant: and leading him gently along, supporting his weak and tottering frame, he brings him carefully to the first place where he might find both rest and refreshment—an inn, or lodging-place, for the accommodation of travellers and strangers [d]: he attends on him there through the night; nor is it until the morning, when he might naturally be so far recovered as not to require his personal presence with him any longer—that he thinks of committing him to the care of any other person. Even so, it is only for a time—because the necessity of his affairs requires him to pursue his journey; but he proposes when he returns, to see him, and to attend to him, again. To insure too, the good-will and

[d] Inns, *πανδοχεῖα* or *diversoria,* though not so common every where anciently, as they are in modern times, yet were not wanting; especially on the great high-roads, where there was much passing and repassing of strangers. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, of the *tres tabernæ* and the *Appii forum,* as such places on the great *via Appia,* in the neighbourhood of Rome.

good treatment of the keeper of the inn, in behalf of the patient whom he leaves in his hands, he pays beforehand for all or part of the expenses which might be incurred by proper attentions to him, during his absence[e]: and if more should be necessary, he promises to defray that too. These are a series of natural and consistent circumstances, every one of which bears the stamp of truth; forming altogether a consummate and beautiful picture—every stroke a characteristic feature of the portrait—and the whole delineation as pathetic and affecting, as artless and unostentatious.

Considered as furnishing the proper answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" the parable inculcates the moral lesson, that every man, who is so situated as to require the good offices of his fellow-men, without regard to place, to nation, to consanguinity, or to any of the ties which connect one man, or more, with a part of mankind more closely than with the rest—and therefore give some, as it would seem, a stronger claim on their sympathies, than is possessed by the rest—must be regarded and treated as their neighbour. It teaches us that in estimating the claims of our fellow-creatures upon our own benevolence, we must pay no regard to mere denominations—to mere accidental and individual distinctions—but attend only to the necessities of

[e] This sum in the original is expressed by two *denaria*, that is, about fifteen pence of our money. Such a sum was adequate in these times, to maintain a person six or seven days at least: which is longer than the Samaritan was likely to be absent. In a week's time a person might travel from one end of Judæa to another.

the case and the reason of things. Are we disposed to allow that the relation of neighbourhood, between whomsoever it exists, conveys a right to receive, on the one hand, and imposes an obligation to bestow, on the other, such and such acts of kindness? would we respect that right, did we know to whom it belonged? would we comply with that obligation, were we certain to what it bound us, and in whose behalf? The parable instructs us, that this right is acquired by any one, who happens to need the assistance of others because of the exigencies of his own situation; that this obligation is entailed on any one, who has it in his power to give present relief where relief is seen to be wanted. The definition of neighbourhood, of its rights and its duties, as applicable to such and such parties reciprocally, is, mutually to stand in need of each other—mutually to be able to help each other. The claims of neighbourhood are therefore resolvable into the claims of a common humanity. The philanthropist as such, the prompt and considerate benefactor of all mankind, is, or will be when there is occasion, their truest and nearest neighbour. We are all neighbours of each other, because we are all fellow-men; we have all a right to the claims of neighbourhood one upon another, because we are all liable to stand in need one of another. Every man, at every time, is virtually a neighbour of the rest; and any man, at a given time, may actually be so: for no man in the present life can be entirely independent of his fellow-creatures, through the whole course of his existence; and no man, however independent of their good offices at one time, but may come to want them at another.

Nor is it in an extreme case merely, like that in

the parable—a case of life or death to one of the parties, as depending on the concession or denial of the good offices of a neighbour, in his behalf, by the other—that the claims of simple humanity are to be acknowledged and respected, as equivalent to the claims of strict neighbourhood: but in the whole intercourse of social existence—and to whatsoever the letter of the duty which must actuate the conduct even in that extreme case, would be applicable besides, from its spirit or principle—whether it be the same in kind, and of as great individual importance or as immediate necessity to its proper object, as that, or not. In all such instances of one man's connexion with another; wheresoever each other's happiness is more or less in each other's power, and more or less dependent upon each other's treatment—the genuine spirit of neighbourhood, like air or light, will pervade the whole frame, and diffuse itself over the whole surface, of social communion; spreading the same balmy and genial influence every where; tempering all, sweetening all, brightening and irradiating all that one man can do unto, and for another; as blessed itself in the communication, as its object in the reception, of its benefits; ever on the watch to do good, and to avoid doing evil, within its proper sphere—and not less anxious to give no pain itself, than to relieve it when otherwise inflicted; smoothing the little asperities, harmonizing the jars and discords, and pouring balm into the petty sores, vexations, and uneasinesses of life; and extending its presence, and evidencing its activity, not merely on great occasions and in an extreme case, but so as to regulate, direct, and refine even the most ordinary and superficial

acts of the intercourse between man and man, by a civility and politeness of manner, a kindness of intention and a suavity of address—peculiar to itself.

We are authorized, however, to infer these truths from the parable, not directly but implicitly: because one man, in a certain instance, without regard to the ties of place or nation, rendered to another those good offices of neighbourhood, which he needed and he himself was able to bestow. Did he render them to him, as a neighbour? No surely, if that relation be understood of the connexion of vicinage, as such. Could he have rendered to him more, had he been his neighbour in that sense? or ought he to have rendered to him less, because he was not? If, however, he did not relieve the object of his compassion, as being properly his neighbour; yet could not have relieved him more had he been his neighbour, nor was obliged to have relieved him less, because he was not his neighbour: it follows that the utmost extent of those very claims which the relation of actual neighbourhood gives one man upon another, is conferred upon any towards the rest, by the mere circumstance that he stands in need of, and that they are able to afford him relief. That one wants assistance, and that another can render it; is enough to make the former entitled to receive it, and the latter bound to concede it, just as much as if they were neighbours in the most confined sense of the term. In other words, whosoever is any way dependent upon another, is so far his neighbour, and has so far a right to be treated by him as such: which is the same thing as saying that all men, in fact, are neighbours or may be so, one of another.

When we consider the audience to whom the pa-

rable was addressed, as well as the nature of the representation contained in it; this conclusion, we shall see, must have come upon them at last with irresistible force. Supposing it the design of the narrative to shew that all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, were neighbours and brothers; with reason might the example of Jews and Samaritans generally, be pitched upon to supply the case in point to prove it. Suppose it intended to convince the Jew in particular that the Gentile and he were brethren; with even more fitness might a Samaritan be shewn as the first to acknowledge, and the first to act upon this truth. Reason, conscience, shame, and gratitude—every conceivable motive which a virtuous emulation could supply, would force the Jew to a similar confession; and stimulate him not to be outdone in the reciprocation of such feelings, and in the imitation of such an example.

> But good the strife—when men the palm contest
> Which most shall love, which most oblige the rest.
>
> Hesiod, Works and Days, 24.

Had the state of the case been different; had Jews been shewn to have extended the kindness in question to a Jew, and a Samaritan to have refused it to him; no such noble lesson would have been inculcated, much less with so humiliating an effect. The Jew would have been taught nothing which he did not believe, or profess to believe to be his duty before; while his sense of propriety, instead of being shocked, would have been gratified; his national pride, instead of being painfully humbled and put to the blush, would have been agreeably flattered; his conscience, instead of being alarmed and terrified, might have been lulled into a more fatal security.

This could not be the consequence of such a representation as that which is given in the parable. The character and conduct of the two Jews and the one Samaritan, are not only pointedly contrasted, but each is exactly the reverse of what was to be expected *per se;* or the one *a priori* was such as could have been expected only from the other. The liberality of sentiment, the indiscriminating benevolence of the Samaritan, the warmth, activity, and promptitude of his sympathies, would have been but worthy of the Priest or the Levite: their contracted views, their bigoted selfishness, their prejudice and inhumanity, would scarcely have been excusable even in the Samaritan: the latter, a rude, an ignorant, an uninformed stranger: the former, the learned, the noble, the refined, among the people of God themselves: the one, a member of a despised or hated nation, whose name was a proverb of reproach in Israel[f]; the other looked up to and reverenced, as the ministers of religion and the instructors of their brethren; whose understandings, it was reasonable to suppose, would have been enlightened with better notions of duty, and whose practice regulated by more unexceptionable principles of conduct, than those of the rest of their countrymen: whose opinions devotion should have expanded into liberality —and whose hearts piety should have warmed into charity—to set their fellow-countrymen the example of owning relationship with all mankind, as creatures of the same God, and children of the same first parents; and as became an enlarged and comprehensive benevolence, not only of acknowledging, but of treating them as brethren.

[f] John viii. 48.

PARABLE TWELFTH. MORAL.

THE RICH MAN'S GROUND.

LUKE XII. 1—21. HARMONY, P. IV. 32.

LUKE xii. 1—21.

1 In the mean time, the multitude being gathered together in tens of thousands, so as to tread down one another, he began to say to his disciples, first: "Take heed to yourselves from the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 But there is "nothing covered up, which shall not be uncovered; and *no-* "*thing* concealed which shall not be known. 3 Therefore, what- "soever things ye have said in the dark, shall be heard in the "light; and what ye have spoken in the closets to the ear, "shall be proclaimed on the housetops. 4 Now I say unto you, "my friends, Fear *nothing* from those who are killing the body, "and have not the means of doing aught more excessive after "that. 5 But I will admonish you whom ye should fear: Fear "him, who after he hath killed (*the body*) hath power to cast "into gehenna (hell): yea, I say to you, Fear this *one*. "6 Are not five sparrows sold for two asses (farthings)? yet is "not one of them forgotten in the presence of God. 7 But "even the hairs of your head all are numbered. Fear ye not "therefore: ye are better than many sparrows. 8 Now I say "unto you, Every one who shall confess (in) me before men, "the Son of man also shall confess (in) him before the angels "of God: 9 but he who hath denied me in the presence of men, "shall be denied *by me* in the presence of the angels of God. "10 And every one who shall say a word of the Son of man, it "shall be forgiven him: but unto him who hath spoken contu- "meliously of the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. 11 And "when they are bringing you to the synagogues, and governors,

" and authorities, take no thought in any wise either how ye
" should defend yourselves, or what ye should say: 12 for the
" Holy Ghost shall teach you, at the hour itself, what things it
" behoveth to say."

13 And one from the multitude said unto him, " Master, tell
" my brother to divide with me the inheritance." 14 And he
said unto him, " Man, who hath appointed me a judge or di-
" vider for you?" 15 And he said unto them, " See (to it) and
" beware of undue desire; for at the time when *all things*
" abound to a man, his life is not of his possessions."

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, " The estate of
" a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. 17 And he be-
" gan to consider within himself, saying, What shall I do? for
" I have not where I must gather together my fruits. 18 And
" he said, This will I do. I will take down my storehouses,
" and build *others* larger: and there will I gather together my
" productions, and my good things. 19 And I will say to my
" soul, Soul, thou hast many good things lying in store for
" many years (*to come:*) take rest, eat, drink, enjoy thyself.
" 20 And God said unto him, O fool, this night do they require
" of thee thy soul again: and the things which thou hast pre-
" pared, for what shall they be? 21 So *shall be* he that trea-
" sureth up for himself, and is not rich unto God."

PRELIMINARY MATTER.

THE notices of time, supplied by the twelfth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and calculated to furnish any probable argument respecting its true place in the order of the Gospel narrative, were pointed out and illustrated in the twelfth Dissertation of the second volume of my former work: to which I beg to refer the reader, if he is desirous of satisfaction on this subject, before we enter upon the consideration of the chapter, and its contents, at present. He will also find it there shewn, that various as are the particulars related in this chapter, they form the ac-

count of what actually transpired at one and the same time, and on one and the same occasion.

The chapter, though containing on the whole nothing but what was said by our Saviour, either of his own accord or in consequence of something which had just before transpired, gives an account not of *one* discourse upon any *one* topic; but of a *series* of discourses, and on a *variety* of topics. Perhaps, as it is said at the commencement, that he began to speak to his disciples *first;* and it appears from verse 54. that he spoke also to the multitudes *afterwards*—both of his own accord—the most general division of the whole discourse from first to last, is into the part contained between ver. 1 and 53; and between 54, and 59, respectively: the former principally, if not exclusively, concerning the disciples; the latter exclusively relating to the people.

It is true, that we find at verse 13, in the midst of the first of these divisions, the mention of a request put to our Lord, by one of the multitude present at the time; the answer to which (extending from ver. 14—21.) gave occasion to, and included the first of the parables proposed for our consideration, as related in this chapter. This request itself must doubtless be regarded as an interruption, accidentally produced; the business of answering which would require our Lord to suspend the thread of his previous discourse. And as that discourse before was properly addressed to his disciples, so did the new subject of discussion casually introduced, not only in the circumstance of its origin but in the nature and drift of the reflections founded upon it, concern the people in general, or the concourse of hearers at the time, as much or even more than the disci-

ples. It is found, however, that if our Lord was engaged on a train of ideas and a series of practical admonitions, especially relating to his disciples, before he was interrupted—he resumes the former topic as soon as he had disposed of the new one; and takes advantage of the interruption itself, to apply the particular moral inference, founded at the time upon it and addressed to the people at large, to a similar but more peculiar doctrine, in which the disciples alone were properly interested.

The comprehensive or leading divisions, however, into which I propose to distribute the contents of the chapter, as far down as we shall have occasion to consider them, are these four; first, from 1—12: secondly, from 13—21: thirdly, from 22—40: fourthly, from 41—48. The rest of the chapter, from 49—53, and from 54 to the end, I except from our proposed examination at present, for two reasons; first, because it makes no part of the matter preliminary to the parables delivered on this occasion, not even to the last of them; which terminates apparently at verse 46, and really at verse 48; and secondly, because a sufficiently minute explanation of the remaining portion of the chapter, was given in the Dissertation of my former work, before referred to; where the reader, who desires to see it, may find it.

These leading divisions are each pointed out and defined by perceptible changes either in the topics insisted on before and after, or in the persons addressed, or in both. Each of them too is capable of subdivisions; the various limits of which are not more difficult of discovery—at least, if a change in

the subject of discourse, a new *status quæstionis* as affecting the conduct, the mention of a new instance or principle of duty, the appearance of a new class of arguments, bearing on a distinct point and directed to a distinct conviction—be made the criterion of their several component parts. Whether there is also a connexion in the subject-matter of such subdivisions, and whether the order of thought by which the speaker passes from one topic to another, is regulated by the usual principles of association; as I observed upon a former occasion [a], is a circumstance of very little importance to the consideration of our Saviour's discourses; the characteristic properties of which we should expect to be, not their attention to order and method, system and regularity, either in structure or argument; but the variety of topics brought together within the same compass; the rapidity of transition from one point to another; the weight and importance of each particular dictum; the sententious brevity, the condensed fulness, the pregnant conciseness, of every part. The style of a legislator not of a moralist, was that which a teacher like our Saviour, would most fitly assume. The true description of a collection of his sayings or precepts, is that of a code or body of laws, of such and such a kind—because the sayings, decisions, and directions of one, whose will was sufficient to define the instance of duty, and to lay the foundation of a moral obligation to obey it.

The existence, however, of some common end and purpose, to which the *whole* of the discourse, or so much of it as may be considered *premeditated*, in

[a] Vol. ii. 273.

having been originally intended for the disciples as well as at first addressed to them—is perhaps subservient—can any such be discovered; will give a degree of connectedness not only to its general divisions, but also to their subordinate members and component parts. It is not improbable that some such end was contemplated by the address from the first; vary, as it might, in its particulars during its course. If there is any ground for this conjecture, the design of the discourse in general must be collected from the concurrent tendency of the parts to some result, more or less the same. The proof of this sameness will be sufficiently established, if that result in each instance is found to be of a practical nature, and specially concerning the disciples of our Lord at the time, regarded in some peculiar point of view. I propose, therefore, by the analysis of the details, to determine whether a principle of connexion like this, may not possibly pervade the whole—whether there be not some leading idea, some unity of scope and purpose, practically concerning the hearers of our Lord, considered as his disciples in particular, to which all that he said to them on this occasion, (or at least the greater part of it,) not excepting the parabolic matter, any more than the rest—may appear to have been subservient.

The first of our divisions extended from verse 1—12. Its subordinate members are these three, 1—3: 4—10: 11, 12.

With regard to the first of these subdivisions—it is clearly resolvable into two parts, and these parts are necessarily connected together; a certain prohibition or caution, on the one hand, and the reasons

of that prohibition or caution, on the other: the former expressed in verse 1, the latter in verses 2 and 3. As to the prohibition or caution itself, it is as concise and simple, as every injunction, whether positive or negative, on a point of duty or question of practice, ought to be: "Take heed to "yourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees, which "is hypocrisy." The parties addressed by this injunction are of course the disciples of our Lord, to whom he began *first* to speak. The reasons assigned for it are twofold; first, a general reason, applicable to all who might be guilty of the breach of the injunction, that is, of the act prohibited by it, in general; which reason is assigned in verse 2: and secondly, a special reason, applicable to the persons addressed, if they should be guilty of the act, in particular; which reason is contained in verse 3.

Now, in what particular capacity the persons addressed by such an injunction as this, that is, our Lord's disciples—must be supposed to stand, to make it applicable to their case; can be determined only by considering first the meaning and restriction of the injunction, which is doubly qualified; first as a caution to beware not merely of *leaven* in general, but of the leaven of the *Pharisees* in particular; and secondly, not of that leaven itself, except as constituting in some sense, and being equivalent to *hypocrisy*. That the term leaven is here used metaphorically, there can be no doubt; that the intention of the metaphor is to describe by the leaven in question the διδαχὴ, *teaching* or *doctrine*—of the Pharisees, may be rendered probable by the following considerations.

The same caution to beware of the leaven of the

three principal sects, including that of the Pharisees, was given to the disciples on a former occasion, recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark, but not by St. Luke[b]. Were there any doubt of the proper meaning of the word here, as defining the object of the required caution, it must be removed by what passed upon that occasion; the very misconception of its signification, which the disciples at first formed, by its simplicity serving to render the explanation afterwards given of the word only the more remarkable, and the import of the term as metaphorically to be understood, only the more intelligible. There might be an apparent ground in the customs of the time, as regulating the intercourse of the different sects, even for that mistake; which would tend in some degree to excuse the disciples for falling into it. But whether with any foundation in the peculiar usages of their countrymen or not, the disciples it seems, were wrong in understanding the allusion to *leaven*, of the *leaven* of *bread;* for which the word was not intended, but for the *doctrine* of the Pharisees, and of the other sects. St. Luke's omission of what passed upon that former occasion, in reference to this prohibition, is presumptively an argument, (founded on the principle usual with him, of relating nothing of the same kind in his own Gospel twice,) that the caution which he records to have been delivered on the present occasion, was virtually one to the same effect with the other; merely repeated on a later occasion, to the persons who had heard the former.

We may take it for granted, then, that to beware

[h] Matth. xvi. 4—12; Mark viii. 13—21. Harm. P. iv. 6.

of the leaven of the Pharisees in this instance as well in the former, is to beware of their διδαχὴ, or doctrine. But what must we understand by the διδαχὴ, or doctrine of the Pharisees? Both in the classical, and also in the common or popular sense of the term, it is capable of standing for each of two things; either for the things taught by the Pharisees; or for the mode and manner of teaching them. The command, then, to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees, *per se*, may be understood here as a command to beware either of what they taught, or of the mode and manner *in which* they taught it; but it cannot be understood of both: and it will make a considerable difference as to the final end of the caution, and the supposed situation and character of the parties addressed by it, in which of these two senses particularly, we conceive it to be here intended.

A caution to beware *of what* the Pharisees taught, could be necessary for persons placed in the situation of *hearers* only; but a caution to beware of the mode and manner *with which* they taught it, might be applicable to persons who were *teachers* themselves. As hearers too, such persons would be addressed by the caution as those who must otherwise have been required to depend for instruction on the Pharisees; but as teachers, as those who would have hearers to instruct themselves; in the former capacity, as liable to be misled by the *authority* of the Pharisees, to receive and believe what they taught amiss; and in the latter, as liable to be seduced by their *example*, to teach something themselves and to inculcate it for belief on others, amiss. That the caution in question is addressed to our Lord's disciples in the latter sense, not in

the former, and as liable to the last mentioned of these dangers, not to the first, may be shewn as follows.

First; though there might have been a time when even the disciples of our Lord, as well as the rest of the people, were obliged to depend for instruction on the Scribes and Pharisees, and required to believe implicitly as they were taught by them; yet from the moment that they became *his* followers and were taken immediately under *his* tuition, this could not be the case with *them* any longer, whatsoever it might be with the rest of their countrymen. As being all his disciples, and all so far scholars or learners in common; as being all to be taught by him; as all acknowledging, or bound to acknowledge no master but himself—it was, that our Saviour said to the disciples, not long after this very time; "That they must not themselves be call-
"ed Rabbi, as having all one and the same Master,
"(or Rabbi,) Christ, and being all themselves equals
"and brethren; nor call any other teacher, Father, as
"having all one and the same Teacher or Father, in
"heaven."[c] It would be inconsistent with the supposition of a peculiar, exclusive relation to himself in this respect, if our Lord had considered them still dependent on any master but himself; or in danger of being misled by the authority of any teachers, whose teaching might differ essentially from his own.

When we were explaining the parable of the leaven, we had occasion to enter at length upon the consideration of this metaphor; and it was then determined that, as the designation of a proper moral cause in connexion with its proper moral effect, the notion of leaven was just as natural, and

[c] Matth. xxiii. 8—10.

just as much of regular occurrence, as that of the grain of mustard-seed, to represent a proper physical or sensible cause, in reference to its proper physical or sensible effect [d]. To the idea of a metaphor so intended, the mode or manner of teaching, the use of a medium or process of instruction, purposely calculated to mislead the learners—to create and perpetuate error—and much more the motives which must actuate the teacher to the adoption of such a mode of teaching—the personal views and principles in which his teaching must be founded; are better calculated to answer, than his doctrine itself, or the nature and description of the things taught by him. These last are themselves effects and consequences of the personal motives and predilections of the teacher. They may be used instrumentally by him, as the means of deceiving and misguiding others; but they are not themselves the reasons which prompt to that use. They may account for the ultimate effect produced by the neglect and dereliction of the proper duty of the teacher, in corrupting the faith or perverting the practice of those whom he is bound to teach; but they are not the first causes of the neglect and dereliction itself.

There are several passages in the Gospels, in which the same word διδαχὴ or doctrine occurs, where the sense requires it to be understood not of the *things taught*, but of the *mode* or *manner* of *teaching* them. Thus Mark i. 22, and Luke iv. 31 [e], when our Lord had been teaching for the first time in the synagogue of Capernaum, at the beginning of his

[d] See vol. ii. p. 191. sqq.

[e] Harm. P. ii. 20.

ministry, we are told by both evangelists "that the "people were astonished at his διδαχὴ," or "doc- "trine;" which the reason immediately subjoined to account for that astonishment, under the circumstances of the case, shews to be meant of his *mode* or *manner* of *teaching;* the one observing, ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς—(which means, "he had been teaching") —ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, "as one having authority;" the other, ὅτι ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ ἦν ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ: "for his word "was (or had been) in authority." After the miracle, too, by which that first instance of teaching was signalized, a miracle of dispossession performed by a word—St. Mark ascribes to the people the very natural remark, τίς ἡ διδαχὴ, ἡ καινὴ, αὕτη[f]; ὅτι, &c. which must surely mean, not what new *doctrine*, but "what new *kind* of doctrine; what new *mode* "and *manner* of teaching is this?" that even a word is obeyed; that a command to depart, is addressed to evil spirits and followed by the effect. We may make the same observation on the concluding words with which St. Matthew sums up his account of the first sermon on the mount[g]; which are exactly to the same purport with the above remarks of St. Mark and of St. Luke. St. John, too, when he had occasion to mention the surprise of those who had just heard Jesus teaching in the temple, at the feast of tabernacles, supposes our Saviour to reply to them by saying, ἡ ἐμὴ διδαχὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὴ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ πέμψαντός με: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that "sent me[h]:" where, though the word *doctrine* may certainly bear the sense of what was, or had been taught, yet it is more consistent with the context,

[f] Ibid. Mark i. 27. [g] Chap. vii. 28, 29. Harm. P. ii. 23.
[h] Chap. vii. 16. Harm. P. iv. 18.

and with the ostensible ground of the surprise previously expressed at it—(viz. that one should be able to teach, that is, among other things, to read and expound the scripture, who had never been taught *letters;* never had received any education to qualify him for such a task—) that we should understand it of the *power* or *faculty* of teaching. And even in that case, the answer assigns a reason sufficient to account for the phenomenon which excited the surprise of the observers, as no more than was to be expected; by describing the possession of the *power* or *faculty* in question as a gift, received immediately from above. The Father could communicate such a power even to one who had never been taught; and he had communicated it, for the discharge of the duties of his ministry, to his Son, whom he had sent.

The leaven of the Pharisees, of which the disciples are commanded to beware, is further described to be such a leaven as constituted hypocrisy. Now hypocrisy is a personal quality; which may properly be predicated of agents or characters, but not of things or doctrines. Either this quality, or the opposite one, whatever that be, (whether sincerity, simplicity, plain dealing, honesty, or the like,) may consequently, under the necessary circumstances, describe the teachers or authors of such and such doctrines, as those doctrines accord with the duty or professions of the teachers—as what they are bound, and even what they profess, to teach, differs from or agrees with what they actually teach—but cannot describe the doctrines themselves; whose proper criterion, whether their teachers be sincere or insincere, and the principles by which

they are actuated be genuine or spurious—the professions which they give out, be real or pretended—is still only truth or falsehood, rectitude or error. It would be a solecism in language, almost as much as in sentiment, to call *false* doctrine *hypocritical*, or to confound falsehood absolutely with hypocrisy; as if even the falsehood of the doctrine necessarily implied the hypocrisy of the teacher. The hypocrisy of the teacher will lead to such an effect in practice, as the falsehood of the doctrine; but the falsehood of the doctrine is no necessary argument of the insincerity of the teacher. Falsehood of the things taught may be simply an error of judgment; but the hypocrisy of the teacher must be a vice of the will. A man may propagate false doctrine in ignorance, and believing it to be real; and so may have deceived himself, or have been deceived in any other way, before he misleads others: but no man can be an hypocrite—that is a dissembler—in ignorance; nor can propagate false doctrine for true, in the character of a dissembler, without knowing it to be such and propagating it nevertheless.

The special reason assigned for the prohibition in question, will naturally reflect some light upon the prohibition, and shew for what kind of caution, and against what, it was intended. Now the persons addressed by this caution are warned to attend to it, on the particular ground that "Whatsoever they "should have said in the dark, should be heard in "the light; whatsoever they should have spoken *or* "whispered, in the closets to the ear, should be "proclaimed on the housetops." It is clear, then, that they are supposed to be warned against nothing which should be spoken *to them*, however secretly,

however much in private; but against something which they themselves should be liable to speak *to others;* and which, however cautiously and secretly communicated, should nevertheless be brought to light. They are warned then, to stand on their guard not against others in behalf of themselves, lest they should be misled and perverted by listening to *them;* but against themselves in behalf of others, lest *they* should be the means of misleading and perverting them. If the disciples of our Lord, the persons directly addressed by this caution, are the parties supposed to be taught; if the Pharisees are their teachers, and their leaven or doctrine is the thing which they taught: a special reason is assigned to make the prohibition binding upon the disciples, which is manifestly irrelevant to the purpose of such a caution, so far as it concerns *them;* but might be very applicable to the situation of the *Pharisees* themselves. But if the leaven is a particular mode of discharging the duty of teachers; if the Pharisees are they who practised that mode; and if the disciples or persons addressed by the caution, are persons whose capacity relative to others was the same with that of the Pharisees, viz. the relation of teachers; if *they* had a duty to discharge in that respect, as well as the Pharisees; and if *they* in discharging it must adopt a manner of their own, as well as the Pharisees: the reason assigned to produce attention to the caution in *their* instance, is very just and pertinent, and as cogent to the point as any which could have been urged.

From the frequent mention of the Pharisees and Scribes in conjunction, which occurs in the gospel narrative, and from the various instances in which

a particular Scribe, doctor of the law, or lawyer, is seen to have been a Pharisee also; we may infer that there was very little difference between a Pharisee and a Scribe, except the name: that most, if not all of the Pharisees were Scribes, and that many, if not all of the Scribes were Pharisees. In most instances, therefore, if not in all, the denomination of Pharisee, and that of Scribe, would be convertible terms. The name of Scribe, it is true, describes a profession, and that of Pharisee, a sect; and a profession too, which none could properly belong to, but such as were of the tribe of Levi; though persons of every tribe among the Jews, might embrace and conform to any one of the existing sects of philosophy, which they liked best. Yet Josephus informs us that the Pharisees in his time, or but a little before it [h], were about six thousand in number; and principally persons belonging to the sacerdotal order. Now the sacerdotal order, and the rest of the tribe of Levi, were by the appointment of the Law, the standing ministers of religion in behalf of the people; the authorized instructors of the rest of the nation, on points both of faith and of practice. If the Pharisees are to be identified with the Scribes or teachers of the law, as such, they too must be regarded as standing in the same capacity; and when their leaven or doctrine is alluded to, as it is in the present instance, absolutely, whether it be understood of what they taught, or of their mode and manner of teaching, it still supposes that they are teachers of some kind or other; and teachers who, as officially constituted in that capacity, had

[h] Ant. Jud. xvii. ii. 4.

so far a *right* to teach, and so far were *bound* to teach.

Their right to this title in the abstract, and the deference due to their authority by virtue of that title, in the abstract, are asserted by our Lord both of the Scribes and the Pharisees, in that well-known declaration: "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in "the seat of Moses[1]." To sit in the seat at all, describes, among the Jews, the attitude of a teacher; and to sit in the seat of Moses describes here, the capacity and profession of teachers who had *succeeded* to Moses; not, however, (as both the reason of the thing and the form of the expression would imply,) to teach any thing different, or to supersede his teaching by their own, but simply to inculcate, explain, and enforce to the people, the substance or particulars of the doctrines of Moses: in one word, as the interpreters and expositors of the *Law*, but nothing more. Hence it was that our Lord proceeded to tell the people further, that "All "which they bade them to keep," that all which they commanded them to do and observe, as we must needs suppose, in their proper capacity, but in nothing else—as mere keepers and expositors of the written word of God—stript of their own comments and glosses; "they were bound to receive and to "obey"—as an authorized interpretation of the word and will of God, though coming from them.

If then the command addressed to the hearers of our Lord upon this occasion, that is, to his own disciples—a command to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees—is a command to beware how they imitated their example, in their proper character and

[1] Matt. xxiii. 1. Harm. P. iv. 77.

relation as the appointed teachers of divine truth—it must proceed on the supposition that the persons addressed either were, or should sometime be, placed in the same situation relative to others, as the Pharisees; having a similar duty to discharge, and being exposed to the same temptations, and liable to the influence of the same motives, to the neglect of their proper duty and the abuse of their particular trust, as the Pharisees themselves; unless they were otherwise fortified and secured against them. This duty is that of teaching; and this trust is that of the dispensation of religious truth. As persons who had such a duty to discharge, and such a trust committed to them, it is clear that the parties addressed upon this occasion are supposed to stand in the official capacity of *ministers of religion:* and these being the disciples of our Lord himself, it follows that they are addressed as invested with a character which they did not now sustain, but in the course of time would certainly come to sustain. Thus much of the present discourse therefore, is clearly addressed to them not as applying to their situation already, but as designed to apply to it hereafter; that is, as laying down rules for the direction of their conduct in such and such respects, not at present, but sometime to come. This discovery furnishes the first insight into what may probably be found to be the common end and design of the whole discourse, if it is directed to the same purpose in general; viz. to lay down and prescribe for the benefit of our Lord's own disciples, his immediate hearers, the rule of duty more especially incumbent on them, in a variety of future emergencies; but in respect to nothing which was

true of their situation, or for which they required to receive instructions, at present.

Concerning the nature of that hypocrisy, which is laid to the charge of the Pharisees in their capacity of the ministers of religion, and is therefore by implication supposed to be the vice or fault, to which ministers of religion by their office are particularly liable, much might perhaps be said; but it may suffice, at present, to observe that it is described not as hypocrisy *absolutely*, but as the hypocrisy of *leaven* or *doctrine;* the practical effects of which must not be confounded with those of simple hypocrisy, however much it may resemble that in its principles and origin. Hypocrisy, as the name itself implies, is the personation of something real by the external resemblance of it and conformity to it, of something else; and in its proper or primary sense, it denotes the representation of manners, passions, sentiments or actions, by dramatic imitation, the scene of which is the stage, and the realities personated by which are promiscuous, and whether good or bad in themselves, may be alike the objects of such imitation. But hypocrisy, in its secondary sense, must be restricted to moral modes which are purposely intended to deceive not by the imitation of *any* real quality, but by the false though specious and artfully disguised appearance of some truly good and laudable quality. None but qualities, which possess this intrinsic excellence, can be worth the pains of imitating; and nothing but the natural good effects and properties of such qualities—which constitute their practical excellence, and should be the exclusive privilege of real worth and goodness—can raise the desire of attaining to the

same results, by a personated likeness of their causes; destitute of the substance and reality but possessing the exterior semblance of the original. If the vicious man cannot otherwise obtain his particular purposes, than by assuming the character and affecting the estimation of the good, hypocrisy is the expedient which he employs with that view, as the most agreeable to his own inclinations, and as the readiest and most convenient to be found: resembling in this respect the forger of money; who to give value and currency to a piece of base metal, finds it the cheapest and easiest means to endue it externally with the colour and appearance of gold or silver.

There may be, consequently, as many kinds of hypocrisy, as there are really good qualities, which admit of being personated by a mask, and are liable to tempt to such a personation, through the desire and expectation of some peculiar advantage, which would result from the possession of the reality. The commonest species of it, however, is that to which the ministers of religion, of all other moral agents, by their very character and profession are most obnoxious. Ministers of religion are men; and as men they are liable to the same passions and temptations as the rest of mankind: but ministers of religion, by their character and profession, are or should be the most virtuous and exemplary of men. Their character and profession themselves are always a restraint upon *them*, even when otherwise ill-disposed; and though they may not and cannot prevent their feeling, yet they must effectually prevent their yielding, to the common passions and temptations of all mankind, with the same publicity and the same disregard to appearances, as the rest of the

world. The kind of fault then, to which a corrupt order of the ministers of religion is most liable, is that of combining external perfection with inward deficiencies, and of imposing on the world by the show of godliness without the substance; which gains them the credit and reputation of real sanctity, decorum of life, and gravity of manners and behaviour, becoming their name and station, while it leaves them at liberty to indulge their depraved appetites in secret, or to promote their selfish and interested purposes with impunity. Hence it is, that in almost every language, hypocrisy, which properly means only personation or imitation, without specifying of what, stands absolutely for an affectation of sanctity; and an hypocrite is commonly understood to be a pretender to superior piety, or moral goodness; a false zealot; a spurious devotee; a merely seeming but specious professor of religion, and lover of virtue.

The hypocrisy of leaven or doctrine, therefore, must agree with all hypocrisy in general, in being the deliberate substitution, from some improper motive, of what is fictitious, but resembles a certain reality, instead of the reality; with a view to obtain that end through and by the fictitious imitation, which properly ought to be obtained, and in fact can be effectually obtained, only through the reality. But as the hypocrisy of leaven or doctrine in particular, it must differ from every other species of falsification in the circumstance of substituting, from motives of its own, false doctrine instead of true; and in seeking to obtain that personal benefit by the aid of the false, which it is not agreeable to its own views or inclinations, to seek to obtain through the

true. Of such hypocrisy there may, perhaps, be as many forms, as there can be modes of deliberately falsifying and perverting the truth of doctrine, for sinister and interested purposes: but that which is elsewhere explicitly laid to the charge of the Pharisees[k]—and therefore, as we may presume, is implicitly intended of them here also—is the specific hypocrisy of teaching as the commandments of God the doctrines and inventions of men; the fact of having set up another standard of faith and practice, not concurrently *with* the old, but *over* and *above* it; of having superseded the written word of God by a traditionary, unauthorized system of belief and morality. A general principle like this would extend the same influence to every particular case; and would lead to the introduction of false doctrine wherever there was need of true. There are too many instances of direct opposition between this law of tradition and the written word of God, pointed out on various occasions by our Lord himself, not to warrant the conclusion that the design of the system was not to interpret or ascertain the genuine sense of the written word of God, but to dispense with and set it aside; and that while it professed to correct it in some things, and to complete or perfect it in others, its object, however concealed, was to elude and frustrate it, in all. The original authors of this conspiracy against the recorded word and will of God, and the great promoters of its success with the people, in the time of our Saviour, were the Scribes and Pharisees: whose motives to it also, as we learn from his testimony likewise, were such

[k] Matt. xv. 1—20. Mark vii. 1—23. Harm. P. iv. 1.

as must actuate all hypocrites, in general—an affectation of sanctity without the reality—an exterior strictness of manners and gravity of deportment, adopted as a cloak for inward impurity—a religion of fastings, ablutions, and bodily privations, with the utmost license to the indulgence of criminal desires, unlawful passions, and selfish interests—a scrupulous display of conscientiousness in small things, and a studied attention to propriety in trifles, with a total indifference to the weightier matters of duty, or even with a systematic neglect and contempt of the latter, as sufficiently atoned and compensated for, by the minute and punctilious observance of the former[1].

The particular crime, then, which we find to be here prospectively condemned, and therefore the particular duty which must be supposed beforehand inculcated, are such as concern the ministers of religion exclusively; viz. the perversion of doctrine, on the one hand, and its preservation pure and uncorrupt on the other, each for a corresponding end and purpose as the motive which must actuate the teachers themselves. If we proceed next to consider the grounds on which the prohibition of the crime, and therefore the encouragement to the duty are placed; these, as we before observed, are twofold—one general, the other particular; the connexion between which may be thus explained.

It is a good argument as a dissuasive from the breach of a particular duty, and therefore as an encouragement to the contrary observance, to insist

[1] Vide Matt. v. 20. vi. 2. 5. 16. Luke xi. 39—44. xvi. 14, 15. Mark xii. 38—40. Luke xx. 45—47. Matt. xxiii. 1—28.

on the penal consequences which may be expected from its violation. The motives addressed to our fears, are naturally stronger than those which are addressed to our hopes; and when the topic of discussion is the neglect of a certain obligation, that is, the commission of a positive crime, they are the first to suggest themselves. That the grounds of the prohibition, then, in this instance, should be laid in the assurance of some punishment as infallibly awaiting the hypocrisy of leaven or doctrine, is not surprising: it is more observable how closely, in this assurance, ill desert is contrasted with retribution, and the letter of the offence with the letter of the treatment that resents it—concealment as the instance of the crime, being opposed by detection as that of the punishment—and secresy on the one hand, being retorted by exposure on the other, both in reference to the same thing. As all hypocrisy proceeds by disguise or dissimulation, in order to be punished it must be first exposed, or stript of its mask; and exposed and stript in reference to the particular pretence or assumption, in which the essence of the dissimulation lay hid. And this, it is said, is what will first be done in reference to those who are guilty of the hypocrisy of leaven in particular—before, we may presume, the punishment of the hypocrite himself.

We find this principle laid down in general terms, in the second verse of the chapter; and in terms which apply it directly to the hearers, in the third. We may infer, then, that the former determines the principle of retributive justice with respect to all such cases as theirs in general; but the latter the rule of proceeding towards such cases

as their own in particular, coming within the same general description: that is, what should be done with hypocrisy of any kind, in order to its exposure, and with hypocrites generally, in order to their punishment, is first declared by the former; and what should be done for the exposure of the hypocrisy of leaven, and for the conviction of hypocritical teachers of religious truth, preparatory to their disgrace and punishment also, is defined in the next place by the latter. The substance of the two declarations together amounts to this; that as all hypocrites shall ultimately be exposed and called to account for their most secret motives, principles, or actions, generally; so shall hypocritical ministers of divine truth be at last detected and called to account for their most secret doctrines or teachings in particular; however little calculated to bear the light they may be.

The word of God though originally revealed by him, yet as its dispensation among both Jews and Christians proves, has always been communicated to men through the medium of men. Hence, however pure and faultless itself, as proceeding from a pure and immaculate source, it is liable to be corrupted and adulterated in its passage to those, for whose benefit it is intended, through some vice and imperfection of the instrument employed to convey it; just as the rays of light, though colourless and undecompounded as they issue from the sun, may be refracted and tinged, by passing through certain media, before they reach the eye. An human instrument, intrusted with the dispensation of the divine word itself, is liable to err in the discharge of his office as the teacher of that word to others,

either voluntarily or involuntarily—either from defect of knowledge or from defect of principle: and though the first of these sources of error, under the circumstances of the case, should be removed, the second may still subsist; and generally speaking, even when the former is impossible the latter must always be possible. An inspired teacher himself, even after the communication from without of *all* the knowledge necessary to qualify him officially for the due discharge of his task, is yet not exempt from the influence of personal, moral motives, which may induce him to prove faithless to his trust, and to pervert and abuse his supernatural gift itself. There was no reason *a priori* to suppose that a direct impression from above on the understandings or intellectual faculties of men, by which they should be enlarged and expanded, and be made capable of the comprehension, as well as endued with the knowledge, of a variety of truths, not before intelligible to them, or possible to have been discovered of themselves; would be accompanied by a similarly direct impression on the will, and not leave that to be influenced by its proper individual motives, as much as before. Nor is there any reason, *a posteriori*, or from the evidence of the fact, to conclude that such has always been the case; or that divinely commissioned and divinely illuminated teachers have never failed in the discharge of their duty, not from a want of ability, but from a want of inclination, to perform it right. And as the possession of an honest and good heart was declared to be necessary for the reception of the word by the hearer, when sown; so the possession of an honest and faithful one, is just as neces-

sary for its communication by the preacher, pure and unadulterated, in being sown. In the present instance, indeed, the failure of the teacher in his proper duty from the want of capacity to discharge it right, is excluded by the necessity of the case; all hypocrisy being voluntary, and originating, not in any defect of the understanding, but simply in the depravation of the will.

St. Paul, speaking of the ministers of religion with whom he identifies himself, uses these words. First, to denote the most general circumstance of their character, in which too, they agreed with the rest of Christians, he says of them; "Let a man so ac- "count of us, as of the servants of Christ." Secondly, to express that particular circumstance of their character, which distinguished them from every other class of the servants of Christ, he adds; "And *as* "stewards of the mysteries (or *secrets*) of the Gos- "pel." Lastly, to describe the practical obligation resulting from this relation, he specifies the duty incumbent upon the ministers of religion, as one which is essentially derived from the office of stewards; "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be "found faithful [m]."

In these representations, he agrees with the doctrine of the present passage, so far as to imply that the ministers of religion must give an account of their ministry, that is, of the discharge of their duty in their proper capacity of instructors and teachers; and he assigns the reason why—which the present passage does not assign; viz. that the office of a religious instructor is a delegated, and therefore a responsible trust. It is essential to the nature of

[m] 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

every trust, that as it has been received from another, and as it is to be exercised for the sake of another, so likewise it must sometime be resigned again by its temporary possessor, and an account of its use must be given to the master by whom it was confided to him. No stewardship, or merely derivative and subordinate commission, can be either perpetual or irresponsible. And the account of a stewardship as such, whensoever it is called for and rendered, must turn upon the question of the use or abuse of that power and authority over some proper subject-matter, for a corresponding end and purpose, in the commission of which the delegation of the stewardship consisted. If the dispensation of the word of God, as committed to the ministers of religion, is such a trust, it must be sometime inquired into by the author of the trust: and the inquiry must be directed to the discovery whether the *stewardship*, that is, the dispensation of the word of God in question, has been duly or unduly, honestly or dishonestly, discharged; whether any thing has been taught as the word of God, which ought not, or any thing has not been taught, which ought; whether all has been taught, as it behoved the word of God, in sincerity and truth, so as to declare the whole counsel of God—or not as became the unity, simplicity, and integrity of that counsel—but with the suppression, perversion, or falsification of any part of the word of truth. The time when this account more especially incumbent on the ministers of religion, is to be exacted, and when their own doctrine, as judged of by its only authentic test and standard, the revealed word and will of God—will witness for or against them, as an evidence of their

faithfulness or their unfaithfulness in their proper capacity of stewards, it is implied in the present passage, is the day of judgment.

The next subdivision of this first paragraph, 4—10, requires to be divided into two parts, 4—7, and 8—10: the first of these, as before, defining a certain duty, and its grounds; the second, the rule of proceeding with respect to its neglect or its observance: so that the plan of the members of this subdivision, agrees with that of the parts of the former; between which a similar connexion was shewn to exist.

To begin with the first. The duty in this instance also, is simple and unmixed, that of being actuated rather by the fear of God than by the fear of man; but in a *certain* case—which being one of comparison between distinct motives of action, supposes of necessity that they compete together, and *would* each lead to a distinct kind of conduct. The reasons or grounds of the duty also are twofold; one, addressed to the fears, the other, to the hopes of the hearers; the former, dissuading from the violation of the duty on a principle of intimidation, the other, encouraging to its observance, on a ground of confidence and assurance.

For first; the duty in question being the obligation to respect the fear of God, *more* than that of man, it must be understood of some case when they clash together, and when it is necessary that one of them, as a motive to action, should yield to the strength and preponderance of the other; that is, when the fear of man would determine the conduct one way, and the fear of God another way, at the *same time*—yet the conduct of the agent must be determined by one or other of them accordingly; and therefore

when submission to one of these motives necessarily implies a disregard or contempt of the other. Except on this supposition, the fear of man may be very consistent with the fear of God; and the obligation to be actuated by either of them, would prove nothing whether for or against the duty of being actuated by the other.

Respect to the fear of God in preference to the fear of man, even under such circumstances, is inculcated on the only principle which must be the cause of the fear that is, or can be, conceived and entertained of any thing. Nothing can be dreadful, which does not possess the power to harm; nor dreadful in an higher or superior degree, as compared with other things also formidable, which does not possess the power to harm in an higher and superior degree likewise. In comparing together, then, the *fear* of God and the *fear* of man, as similar but opposite principles of action, the contrast lies between the *power* of God and the *power* of man: and the degrees of that power respectively are measured by the magnitude of the *evil* to be apprehended from either respectively, as compared with the other. The utmost effect of the power of man, and therefore the utmost measure of the fear which may properly be inspired by that power, is *death*, in the ordinary sense of the word; that is, the destruction of one of the two constituent parts of the same living and sentient, human being—the body, but without the effect of inflicting any further, independent injury upon him, in his other part, the soul. The superior magnitude of the power of God in comparison of the power of man, and therefore the much greater obligation to respect the fear of God than the fear of man,

where they clash together, appears from this; that the power of God is still able to pursue and to punish the objects of its vengeance, after the power of man has stopped short, as having done its worst and wrought its full effect. That is, the power of God, if it pleases, can follow up the destruction of the body by the destruction of the soul; or what amounts to the same thing, is competent to destroy the soul with as much ease, as the power of man to destroy the body.

Now if the distinction thus drawn between these things, as the proper ground or motive which must actuate the conduct of moral agents in one way or another, under corresponding circumstances, was intended to apply to the situation of the parties addressed; it follows that they were addressed as placed in a situation when they would have to decide between fearing God or fearing man, as motives to action which under the circumstances of the case, were directly opposed to each other, and prompted to opposite lines of conduct; when submission to the fear of man was exposing them to the enmity of God, and *vice versa;* when the utmost was to be apprehended from the power of man, and something still more from the power of God; when a great and immediate, but comparatively a smaller mischief was to be expected from contempt of the fear of man; and a much greater, though a less immediate and a more remote one, from disregard of the fear of God; when, in one word, the power of man threatened the destruction of the body, but the power of God the salvation of the soul, and temporal death would be the consequence of despising the former, eternal damnation, of not being influenced by the latter.

GEN. THEOL. SEM. OF THE PROT. EPIS. CH.

The parties addressed, are still the same that our Lord began with speaking to; those, whom at the outset of this second subdivision of his discourse, he styled with peculiar emphasis and equal tenderness, *his friends;* that is, his disciples. A command however, which inculcated the fear of God in preference to the fear of man, under such peculiar circumstances as these, could be applicable to nothing in the actual situation of the disciples at present; nor to any thing in their possible future situation, except as that of persons who might have to suffer persecution for the faith's sake; nor even as of persons liable to suffer on that account under ordinary circumstances, and from the ordinary effects of persecution, but in the extreme case, when persecution is going to the utmost lengths of which human violence is capable, and they who are subjected to its effects, have to choose between the fear of man, seconded by its worst terrors, and the fear of God, contemplated in a still more formidable aspect; when they have no alternative before their eyes, except immediate death with the maintenance of their faith, through the power of man—or everlasting death with the renunciation of their faith, through the power of God; and therefore, when they may apprehend the utmost from the one, if they provoke it, in the destruction of the body, but still more from the other, if they provoke that also, in the destruction of the soul. Now this is the case of the martyr; who is called upon to suffer for the faith's sake, even to the shedding of his blood, if need be. To this case, therefore, we may conclude that a description of some future, if not some present contingency in the situation of the disciples—which is so apposite to it—was meant to refer; and conse-

quently, that it was especially for the direction of their conduct in that most trying and difficult of all the emergencies, in which as professors of Christianity they should hereafter be placed, yet destined to prove not the least frequent of all; that the present command, and the reasons on which it is grounded, were designed.

The alternative in question amounts in effect to this proposition; Whosoever, for the sake of saving his body—(that is his life—) renounces his faith, shall lose his soul. There is another combined with it, the converse of it, and conspiring practically to the same result; Whosoever, for the sake of retaining his faith, loses his body, shall save his soul: and both are virtually the same with what was affirmed elsewhere, that whosoever should be desirous to save his life, should lose it; and whosoever should be willing to lose his life for Christ's sake, and the Gospel, should in reality save it[n]. In each of these instances, there is the same reference to the predicament of the martyr—to the extreme case of renouncing Christ and the hope of future happiness, or renouncing life and its present enjoyments. But these two considerations respectively are directed to different principles of action, and to different motives of the human will; the one, pointing exclusively to what may be dreaded from neglect of the martyr's duty, under the proper circumstances, the other, to what may be expected from the faithful discharge of it; the former, therefore, addressed to the fears, the latter appealing to the hopes of the hearers[o].

[n] Matt. xvii. 25: Mark viii. 35: Luke ix. 24. Harm. P. iv. 9.

[o] There is a very similar sentiment to that considered above, apud Josephum, De Maccabæis, 13. if, indeed, the work be his,

There might be no need of arguments to prove that the enmity of God is capable of being excited by the same causes, as the enmity of man; that he will resent an injury, contempt, or indignity, done or intended to be done to himself, just as much as man: nor that the enmity of God is not to be braved with impunity, any more than the enmity of man; that his power is as adequate to the production of its proper effects, and will as certainly produce them, if provoked, as the power of man. The martyr therefore, who notwithstanding the promises and encouragements of God, in the moment of trial renounces his faith, and abjures his dependence on God—might evidently be supposed to do that which forfeited the favour, and incurred the enmity of God in this life, and rendered the agent liable to the worst effects of his enmity, seconded by his power, in the next. But it might require some argument to prove, that he, who under such circumstances, should submit to any sacrifice, even the sacrifice of life itself, to retain his faith, and to preserve inviolate his trust in the friendship and protection of God, would after all be no loser; and though he might appear to throw away his life, and to part with it needlessly as a thing of no value, when he might so easily have kept it,—he should in reality secure it, and make it his own, as the heir of a blessed immortality, for ever. This, which is truly the superior wisdom, the real prudence, the transcendent excellence and superlative happiness of the martyr's choice, under the proper circumstances; is that which,

and not that of some Christian: *μὴ φοβηθῶμεν τὸν δοκοῦντα ἀποκτεῖναι τὸ σῶμα· μέγας γὰρ ψυχῆς κίνδυνος ἐν αἰωνίῳ βασανισμῷ κείμενος τοῖς παραβαίνουσι τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

in the apprehension of infidels or scoffers, who account his life to be madness and his end to be without honour, passes for the most striking proof of his infatuation, his folly, his rashness—his shame and wretchlessness itself.

The reasons employed to establish this conviction, are as apposite as any which could have been produced. They have each the nature of arguments *a fortiori;* from acknowledged instances of the care and providence of God in matters comparatively the most trifling, yet to a certain extent analogous to the case of the martyr himself—tending to confirm his faith and trust in the same care and providence, as certainly to be expected in his own behalf above all things. The martyr's choice involves the sacrifice of two things, both very valuable of their kind; the loss of life in general, and the loss of the body in particular. With the death of a martyr, with the sacrifice of a Christian's life for the faith's sake; what is contrasted, and with what view? The death of a sparrow, in any manner effected [p]; the falling to the ground or individual disposal of one of the most insignificant apparently among things living—the creatures of God —which yet takes not place without his knowledge and observation of the fact of the disposal; without his approbation or disapprobation of the loss of life, so sustained. Much less then, can the martyr perish,

[p] St. Luke expresses this allusion here by, "Are not five "sparrows sold for two farthings?" (Roman *asses.*) Matt. x. 29. expressed it by, "Are not two sparrows sold for one farthing?" (or one *as.*) What is more common in the retail of wares in the market, than to see two things of a certain kind, offered for sale at one penny, and five for two pence?

unknown to and unobserved by God; nor, if with his knowledge and observation—without his approval of the sacrifice made for his sake; and without the certainty of his amply rewarding the sufferer for it. With the devotion of the body under the same circumstances, and the loss of that to its possessor, as another part of the martyr's sacrifice—as given perhaps to be burned—we have in like manner, contrasted the loss of an hair of their heads: the least valuable part of themselves, the least sensibly felt when lost to the possessors, of any thing that makes a part of themselves [q]. Yet the hairs of the head of believers all were numbered, and not one could be detracted from their amount and perish, unknown to their God and Father; much less could their bodies be lost in his service, without his notice and without his concern. If they lost them through the violence of men, for his sake, in this life, doubtless they should receive them again at his hands, much more illustrious and glorious, in the next.

Were any doubt remaining as to the correctness of the view thus taken of the first part of this subdivision, it would be removed by the testimony of the second; the object of which, as before observed, is to define the rule of proceeding in resenting the breach, or in rewarding the observance, of the duty prescribed by the former. Here also we may remark,

[q] This allusion to the hairs of the head, as being all numbered, is doubtless intended to shew the great value set by God on the least considerable part of the persons of his own disciples. Yet Mr. Harmer (ii. 55. ch. vi. obs. xxx.) has some observations and testimonies to prove that in the opinion of the people of the East, the beard, the hair of the head, &c. were things of great importance. With regard, indeed, to the beard, we know that to be the case still.

how exactly good and ill desert are confronted with the recompense to be awarded to them respectively; and how the very letter of the neglect or the observance is met and requited by the return of the same thing in kind. "Now I say unto you, Every "one who shall confess (in) me before men, the Son "of man also shall confess (in) him before the angels "of God: but he who hath denied me in the pre-"sence of men, shall be denied (*by me*) in the pre-"sence of the angels of God." Confession of Christ before men, by man, will be rewarded by confession of man before angels, by Christ; and denial of Christ in the presence of men, by man, will be resented by denial of man, in the presence of angels, by Christ. The state of the case, as regards the author of the confession or of the denial respectively, in the first instance, is the same as before; viz. the necessity of choosing between one of two things, with the prospect of a good and an evil before him, in either case; a great present evil, with the assurance of a much greater good to come, or a minor temporary good, with the certainty of a still worse evil hereafter. For that the denial of Christ before men, which is to be met and resented by the denial of man before angels, is not a denial under *any* circumstances, but such a denial as is followed by the *saving* of the body in the present life; and that the confession of Christ before men, which is to be rewarded in kind by the confession of man before angels, is such a confession as is followed by the *loss* of the body in the present life, must be evident. On the same principle, then, the denial of man before angels, opposed to the one, will be followed by the loss of the soul at that time, as the reverse of the saving

of the body before; and the confession of man before angels, the reward of the other, will be followed by the salvation of the soul on that occasion, in return for the losing of the body on the former. Nor can this loss of the soul, under such circumstances, imply less than everlasting death in the one case; nor the salvation of it, under the same, less than everlasting life in the other.

With regard to the verse which follows, and completes this subdivision; though the repetition of the allusion to blasphemy (or saying a word) against the Son of man, as opposed to blasphemy (or speaking contumeliously) against the Holy Ghost, contained in it, points perhaps, to an instance of the fact of the blasphemy itself, the recollection of which might have been suggested by what had very recently transpired[r]; there is no necessity to suppose that this second allusion to the subject is a mere repetition of what was before said about it, and has not an use, a significancy, and an application of its own, which render it independent of any reference to the past.

There may be, indeed, the same opposition between the blasphemy against the Son of man and that against the Holy Spirit, founded on the different personal end and direction of one and the same instance of aggression—now as before; that is, it may still be the *same* offence, whatever be its own nature, which is supposed to be committed personally against either of two distinct objects, both of them, *a priori*, equally capable of having it committed against them. The one, too, may be understood

[r] Cf. Matt. xii. 22—37: Mark iii. 22—30: Harm. P. iii. 13. Vol. ii. Diss. xviii. and Luke xi. 14—36: Harm. P. iv. 30.

to be unpardonable, exactly in the same sense in which the other is pronounced to be pardonable, now as well as before. But the persons, who are warned upon this occasion, against the commission of the offence, and therefore are supposed to be previously liable to commit it, are not the same as before. *Then* they were the unbelieving Jews in general; *now* they are the disciples of our Lord in particular. Nor are the circumstances under which it is supposed that the offence must be committed, if committed by any, the same now as before. Before, the offence if committed at all, was to be committed during the personal ministry of Christ; and by some of those, who having to decide upon the truth of his character, with the help of its proper proofs, (as supplied by his miracles more particularly,) were liable to doubt or error in coming to the conclusion, whether he were the Messiah: but now, if to be committed again at all, it must be after the cessation of his personal ministry, and by one of those, who though they might have already received him as the Messiah, were liable to the question, whether they should always continue to believe in him as such.

The occurrence of this verse, immediately after the former, is a presumptive argument that they have a common tendency; and the true view of their relation appears to me, in fact, to be this; that while the former lays down a general position, the latter defines and explains it in an important particular, necessary to its being rightly understood and justly applied; viz. by specifying what sort of a denial of Christ before men that must be, which should infallibly lead to the denounced penal retribu-

tion of the denial of man before angels. It must be such a denial, as besides speaking a word against the Son of man, should incur the further guilt of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. The former, if not accompanied by the latter, being capable of repentance, and pardonable, might be forgiven, or not imputed; but the latter, being incapable of repentance and unpardonable in itself, could not be forgiven, and must therefore of necessity be imputed.

Were we to suppose that this distinction between a simple denial of Christ, even by one of his own disciples, of the former kind, and the more complex and aggravated one of the latter description, was designed for the benefit and assurance of those who in times of persecution might lapse and be induced to renounce their faith, through weakness and irresolution, constitutional timidity, the overpowering violence of pain and suffering, or any other venial motive short of a wilful and deliberate apostasy; neither would it have been an unnecessary precaution, if we consider the frequency of such cases in the early ages of Christianity, nor one unworthy of the goodness, the benevolence, and even of the justice of Christ. But that the description of the more serious and unpardonable form of the offence, might apply to those who should be guilty of a deliberate apostasy; a falling away not originating in infirmity, but in depravity, nor terminating in the simple renunciation of Christianity, but running back into the bigotry and prejudices of Judaism, or into the errors and impurities of false religion; may be inferred both as not inconsistent with the terms of the description, which represents it as an injury done especially to the Spirit,

and as confirmed by the testimony of St. Peter, and of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, each of whom recognises the possibility of such a defection; and though with somewhat more of minute delineation, appears to portray no sort of apostasy in general but that[s].

The third subdivision of the paragraph, or verses 11 and 12. contains, like the rest, a certain precept or direction, and the reason of it. As each of them however occurs again hereafter, in the course of the prophecy on the mount, we may reserve the necessary explanation of both until we come to that prophecy. I will observe only at present, that the concluding words of the eleventh verse would have been more correctly rendered in the authorized version, had they stood thus: "Take no thought (or be "not concerned) in any wise either how ye should "defend yourselves, or what ye should say."

The simple inspection of these words also, proves that they are addressed to the hearers in a capacity, which they did not, and could not, sustain at present, however possible it might be for them to sus-

[s] 2 Pet. ii. 20—22: Hebrews vi. 3—7. It is no objection to the above explanation, that all *blasphemy* is essentially a sin of words, and therefore so is the *blasphemy* against the Spirit; nor that *saying a word* being the specific crime to be committed against the Son, *saying a word* must also be that to be committed against the Holy Ghost. This may be the description of the *overt* act merely; which by a very common metonymy, may be put for the principle whence it proceeds. The literal blasphemy against the Spirit might take place, under peculiarly aggravated circumstances of apostasy, as well as not; and in any case, the sin of blasphemy, no more than any other species of guilt, is contracted by the outward act, but through the inward motive and first impulse to it, suggested by the personal depravity of the author.

tain it hereafter; viz. that of persons who should have to defend themselves before magistrates, tribunals, and civil authorities generally; that is, who stood in the specific capacity of Christian advocates, confessors, or apologists. So far then, as we have proceeded in the examination of the present discourse, we see an unity of design pervading it, and that design to be a practical one; viz. to lay down rules for the direction of the conduct of the hearers, our Lord's own disciples, in certain future capacities, arising out of their peculiar relation to himself. There is a determinate order and connexion too, among these capacities themselves. That, in which the hearers are first addressed, is that in which they should first be placed; the others might follow in due time upon it, but they must still presuppose it. Christian preachers and ministers must be prior to Christian martyrs, confessors, and advocates. For the same reason, the first would continue to be retained, even when there was no room or no necessity for the latter: Christian ministers must still teach and preach, though they may not be called on to suffer, or have occasion to answer publicly for their religion. The first was consequently the primary and essential character of the persons addressed; the latter were their secondary and accidental; and the first was nothing else but that of the proper order of Christian teachers—the representatives of a standing ministry —the depositaries and dispensers of religious truth or moral instruction.

We observe moreover that as all these precepts, respecting the hearers in so many different characters, each of them equally future, are addressed to our Lord's personal followers, that is, the first con-

verts to Christianity as such; so the last command of all, which applies to them specially in the capacity of Christian advocates, is from the nature of the case to be restricted to them, and could not be applicable, under any circumstances, to Christians of a time later than the first ages. Of none but believers of the first ages can the promise of a supernatural assistance, to be derived immediately from above at the time of need, and to supply the necessary powers of eloquence and argument, for the triumphant discharge of the part of the Christian advocate, answering for his religion and for himself, be supposed to have been intended. And on the ground of this analogy, we might reasonably contend that even the two former precepts, which apply to the case of Christian ministers and Christian martyrs, in reference to the duty arising out of their peculiar situation, and which so far would seem to be capable of a more enlarged and extended application—are yet to be restricted in their first intention, to the case of our Lord's personal disciples, the first converts to Christianity, and the members of the first church in particular; viz. that, established among the Jews. This conclusion will be found of some importance hereafter.

The second paragraph of the chapter extends from verse 13—21. It consists of a discourse too, as well as the former; but as this discourse was certainly produced by an interruption from one of the multitude, so is it plainly directed to the multitude in general, and not to the disciples in particular. If therefore, our Lord was speaking before to them, and on topics which concerned none but them—or none but such as should sometime

be placed in the same situation with them—he must now be supposed to address himself exclusively to the people at large; and therefore either to abandon his former topics, or at least to suspend and defer them for a time: which last, as we shall find, is indeed the case.

When, then, he was arrived at that part of his discourse, which formed the end of the last paragraph—either he made a pause in its continuity, which might allow a person to speak to him; or he was prevented from proceeding, by a request suddenly addressed to him, from some one of the company present; that he would interfere between himself and his brother, in a dispute which concerned *them* individually—the division or disposal of their father's patrimony. As the man who preferred this request, was an hearer of Jesus at the time, and as his object was to procure, if possible, through the mediation of Jesus, the redress of some wrong, real or imaginary, done to him by his brother; it is probable that his brother was present, and that the circumstance of their both being on the spot, was the exciting cause of his request. No time was so likely to be chosen by one who had to complain of an act of injustice on the part of another, which he thought the interposition of our Lord was likely to redress—for applying directly to him, with the view of inducing him to interfere—as when he was teaching in public, and both the party aggrieved, and the author of the supposed grievance, were among his hearers. This consideration would account for the man's application to our Lord, as a casual, unpremeditated event; without the least reflection on the sincerity or innocence of *his* intentions in making it, what-

ever reason our Lord might have, upon other grounds, not to allow himself to be appealed to on any such question.

A request to interfere in settling the claims of two parties to their respective shares of a disputed inheritance, involved in its consequences the question of the right or the expediency of our Lord's assuming the office and authority of a civil magistrate; whose business alone it could be to interpose in those matters, and whatever the law upon such cases was, to enforce it, and see that both parties obtained their due. Now the office and authority of a civil functionary are very different from those of a prophet and moral teacher; in which capacity alone both John the Baptist originally, and our Lord himself subsequently, had hitherto appeared; and in which also, to be consistent with the unity of his character from the first, and with the proper end of his mission itself, it was necessary that he should continue to appear.

The question is not, whether it might become a moral teacher to interfere in a particular case, for the purpose of enforcing what was right: but in what way—and whether in a manner suitable to his own character, office, and relation, or alien from them. The exercise of a civil jurisdiction of any kind, was one which the enemies of our Lord, the Scribes and Pharisees, would gladly have seen him assume; an assumption and exercise of authority which, in the case of the woman taken in adultery, they had once before artfully endeavoured to obtrude upon him[t]; and which in two other instances,—that of the ques-

[t] John viii. 3—11. Harm. P. iv. 20.

tion concerning divorce[u], and that of the payment of tribute[x], they attempted with equal artfulness and malice, though with the same ill success, to persuade him unawares to assert: that so they might have accused him, with a specious and plausible pretext, either to the Roman governor or to the people. Now a question which concerned the rights of inheritance, that is, the descent and enjoyment of property, would have come home to the interests and passions of men, as soon as any thing. To have interfered in such a question directly and judicially, would have afforded our Lord's enemies that advantage which they had so long sought to obtain; and to have interfered even extrajudicially, and in any way which implied the assertion of authority to decide in such cases, though stopping short of the actual exercise of juridical power, would have furnished an handle for misrepresentation, that would no doubt have been turned to his prejudice.

The petition of the individual, who sought to obtain, through the mediation of Jesus, the redress of a private wrong by which he professed to be the sufferer; must have been either reasonable or unreasonable, just or unjust, in itself, and known to him to be such. Now, had it been unreasonable and unjust, and had the petitioner himself been conscious that it was so, it is not probable that he would have presumed to apply to our Saviour for redress; for that would have been either to call in question his omniscience, as if he could without knowing it, be interested in behalf of what was wrong; or to suppose

[u] Matth. xix. 3—12: Mark x. 2—12: Harm. P. iv. 50.

[x] Matt. xxii. 15—22: Mark xii. 13—17: Luke xx. 20—26: Harm. P. iv. 70.

him indifferent about what his authority was to be interposed; whether on the side of reason and justice, or on that of their contraries. No one, we may take it for granted, would have applied to such a person as our Saviour, to redress a wrong that was not clear and indisputable. But it would not follow that however clear and indisputable the wrong might be; however just and reasonable the grounds of the application to himself; it would be as proper for him to grant the request, as it might be innocent and natural for the aggrieved party to prefer it.

The object of the petition, which was, that Jesus would speak to the brother of the petitioner, to induce him to divide the inheritance with him—is a further argument that the request itself was not unjust or unreasonable; because it is that kind of request which in an actual dispute between two brothers, concerning the descent of patrimonial property, might naturally be put in consequence of a real cause of complaint. The principle of Jewish law, which regulated the descent of property, or the division of a patrimonial estate among the children of its former possessor, was the principle of distribution in certain proportions. The eldest son received a double portion; that is, twice as much as the rest of the family: the rest were entitled to share alike[y]. On this principle, the petitioner, having one brother, but as it seems only one, besides himself, even were that brother, as is probable, an elder one, would yet have been entitled to a third of their father's property; and his brother might have been detaining the whole.

The answer of our Lord was directly returned to

[y] Deuter. xxi. 17. Cf. Jos. A. iv. viii. 23.

the petitioner, declining his suit; but he did not decline it on the score of its own merits, which yet might easily have been done, had the nature of the case required it, if it was founded in no right, if it had neither justice nor equity on its side—but simply on that of the impropriety of preferring such a request to himself—as arguing an ignorance of his proper office and jurisdiction. "Man, who hath appointed "me a judge or divider for you[z]?" Who appointed me a judge, to interfere in civil disputes at all? or who appointed me a divider, to interfere in the division of a disputed inheritance, that is in the disposal of property in particular?

It has been already observed, that the brother of the party professing to be aggrieved, was probably present when the latter made his application to our Lord; and therefore as he might hear the complaint, so he might the answer returned to it. We have likewise observed, that as it would have been dangerous to interfere juridically in a dispute like this, to enforce the claims even of an injured person, by procuring him redress in conformity to the law; so to have interposed in it by means of advice or in the way of mediation, with a view to obtain the satisfaction of the injury by the voluntary act of the injurer himself, would not have been safe. The enemies of our Lord would have misconstrued that kind of interference, as well as the other. Even then, after correcting the error of judgment which induced the petitioner to appeal to him, under a misconstruction of his character—as though to decide on litigated questions of civil right or wrong

[z] Cf. Acts vii. 27. Τίς σε κατέστησεν ἄρχοντα καὶ δικαστὴν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς;

were the object of his mission, and the proper discharge of his official duties—had our Lord been disposed to attend to his suit, notwithstanding—especially if there was reason and justice on its side—in what way could he have done this both safely and consistently, except in his strict ministerial capacity, as a teacher of righteousness, as an authorized expositor of the rule of duty applicable to this, as well as to every other case of right or wrong action alike? It was, no doubt, possible, and it was certainly in unison with our Saviour's ministerial character if it was possible—to draw from this *particular* incident the means of a *general*, instructive lesson, which should be not less calculated to benefit his hearers as moral agents in common, than suitable to the case of these two litigants in particular—both of him, who was withholding a certain right, and of him, who was claiming one—exposing and condemning the principle which probably actuated the conduct of each; and while it enforced the obligation of equity, justice, and honesty on the one side, recommending moderation, forbearance, and indulgence even on the other.

We perceive accordingly, that immediately after his reply to the man, our Lord proceeded to inculcate a caution, and in terms unusually strong and significant; which must, therefore, have been directed either to these two persons, or to the surrounding multitude, or to both; "See (to it) and guard your-" selves," *that is*, "beware of" (what is called in the Greek) "πλεονεξία." It is a caution then levelled against the predominance of a *principle;* and if the word which expresses that principle, be rightly translated *covetousness*, which was specially appli-

cable to a case like this, where money or property was the thing at stake, and the appropriation of property, whether as unjustly detained or as unjustly claimed, was the question at issue. But the word which is rendered by *covetousness*, may be more properly translated by the spirit of undue desire—the spirit of greediness—the wish and pursuit of more than enough. It denotes in strictness the *possession of too much*, that is, *more* than a person's *due:* which when the possessor himself is to blame for it, describes an effect rather than a cause, and is the practical consequence of a certain principle of action; but not the principle itself. No metonymy however, is more common, than that which expresses a certain *cause* which will produce such and such effects, by the name of these natural effects: and in that way the idea of the appropriation by any one of more than his due, in the division of a common subject—of the unjust usurpation of the rights of others—which is strictly implied by the original term—may be used to describe the principle or motive out of which these acts proceed; the spirit of greediness—the spirit of selfishness—the spirit of undue desire.

But as the desire of too much, and the possession of too much, each imply an *excess* of some kind; and as all excess requires to be estimated by a reference to some standard, considered as the proper criterion of *enough;* this standard, as referred to the individual himself who is guilty of the excess in question, may be twofold; either the measure of his own wants, or the measure of his own rights. In the one case, the standard is referred to the quantum of personal wants—the necessities of a common na-

ture—which must be the same to one individual as to another; in the other, to the degree of personal right —the claims of distributive justice; which while it awards to all their respective dues, cannot award them to each in exactly the same proportion, unless the personal claims of each are exactly equal also. Too much in the former sense, is more than enough in comparison of the individual's *wants*, and therefore of what ought to be the measure of the individual's desires: and too much in the latter, is more than enough in comparison of the individual's *deserts*, and therefore of what he ought to claim. An undue desire of the first sort implies a spirit of greediness, tantamount to selfishness—but not necessarily of injustice; and an undue desire of the latter kind, implies a spirit of both. An undue desire of the latter kind must always attach to the usurpation of another person's rights; yet one of the former sort is not incompatible with the prosecution even of a claim. The rights of one man cannot be usurped by another, without violence, fraud, or rapacity on one side: but they may still be reclaimed and the usurpation may be resisted, in the spirit of greediness, in the spirit of undue desire, if not of fraud or rapacity, on the other.

A command, then, to beware of the spirit of undue desire, stated absolutely, and neither defined itself nor limited by what follows, must be understood in its widest extent; as levelled against every sort of undue desire to which the prohibition is applicable. That it was not intended to be limited in the present instance, may be inferred from this fact; that a reason is assigned for the prohibition, which applies to both kinds of the principle, both the

spirit of immoderate desire, and the spirit of injustice, where each is supposed to be founded in the *common* disposition to value and covet the possession of too *much*—of more than a man can *want*, or more than a man can *claim*—for the *same* reason, the exclusive benefit and enjoyment of the possessor himself.

This reason is contained in the latter part of the 15th verse; the construction of which in the original is somewhat intricate and obscure. The following I believe to be the order of the words, when the ellipsis which they contain is supplied: Ὅτι ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν τινὶ (τὰ πάντα) ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῦ; and the following is their literal version; "For at the time when *all things* abound "to a man, his life is not *of* his possessions." Substantially they amount to this proposition, That at no time, not even when the means of subsistence are most abundant, is existence itself the *effect* of those means; in the midst of plenty life is as insecure, as in the midst of scarcity; and however ample a man's possessions may be, and however sure his prospect of self-enjoyment if he continues to live—wealth is no voucher for the continuance of existence, no guarantee for the security of life as such—which was neither bestowed at first along with it, nor is attached to it as a necessary consequence or effect of its possession.

The reason, then, of the prohibition of undue desire, is placed upon the known uncertainty of life even in the midst of plenty and profusion; to the validity of which argument it is obviously necessary that the plenty and profusion themselves, in the immoderate desire of which the principle consists,

should be supposed to be coveted for the sake of their enjoyment, and what is more, their selfish and individual enjoyment. It would be of little avail to caution the hearers of the precept, against cupidity which had *excess* for its object, by warning them that in the midst of abundance, they might at any moment be cut off—that is, at once be debarred from the enjoyment of the coveted possession—if the sole or principal motive to such cupidity were not the means of gratification which the possession of more than enough would bestow, *for* and *upon* the possessors themselves. As a simple dissuasive from the desire of the means of subsistence under *any* circumstances, and with *whatever* further view in their possession—the consideration of the uncertainty of life in the midst of such means, is as applicable to the desire or possession of just enough, as to that of too much: and might be as fitly urged to intimidate persons, who were free from the spirit of undue desire, yet not insensible of the necessity, nor indisposed in a just degree to value and wish for the possession of the goods of life, from acting according to such principles—as those who were not free from it. We cannot suppose our Saviour intended this; nor therefore, to propose the consideration of the insecurity of life at *all* times, except as a dissuasive from the undue desire of too much *as* too much: and consequently for its own sake.

Now this is a description of the principle in question, which applies at once to the case of the man, who is actuated in the pursuit of wealth, by the spirit of fraud, rapacity, and injustice; and to his, who is instigated by the spirit of cupidity or greediness only—if as it commonly happens, the

end which both of them contemplate in the enjoyment and use of the wealth they so much covet, when obtained, is the same; viz. their own gratification and indulgence. Nor does it make any difference whether the abuse of wealth in question consists in hoarding it up unprofitably both to its owner and to others, or in the lavish and wasteful profusion of it all upon the self-enjoyment of its possessor. Both these are alike misapplications of the same good, though in different ways; and both are equally opposed to its only legitimate use: both may originate in the same love of money for the sake of its possession, and therefore in the same principle of selfishness, at bottom—in the one case as ministering to the enjoyment of the possessor, *per se*, in the other, as furnishing the means of ministering to it in a variety of other ways; the mere hoarding and possession of wealth being the source of as selfish and exclusive a gratification to the miserly and covetous, as spending it upon his pleasures, amusements, and indulgences of any kind, is to the prodigal and voluptuary. The latter however, is really the worse evil of the two, both being estimated by their practical consequences as well to the thing possessed, as to the possessor himself and to others. Of the possible modes of applying not only wealth, but any other possession which may be used aright, as well as used amiss, and which may not be used right, yet not actually used wrong—that kind and degree of the application which go to the length of actually abusing the thing possessed, to improper and unnatural purposes, must, on every principle, be more opposed to its due and legitimate application according to its natural powers and

capabilities, than that which goes only to the length of simply not using it at all; that is, which if it does not use and apply it right, still stops short of using and applying it wrong. The former is only negatively evil, the latter is positively criminal. And as it would be better for our moral responsibility, not to *have had* a certain possession which we were likely to abuse, but for the abuse of which we were liable to give an account; so would it be better for the account itself which we might have to render, to have had such a possession and merely not to have used it right, than to have had it and actually to have used it wrong. On this account, perhaps, both in the present instance, and in every other where the subject of discussion is the use or abuse of wealth, the species of the abuse which is especially held up to exposure and condemnation, in our Saviour's parables, is that of the voluptuous and prodigal, not of the miserly and covetous man.

Now the opposition insisted on, between the insecurity of life, that is, the power of continued enjoyment, and the possession of abundance, that is, the constant presence of the means of enjoyment; seems to imply, that as the continuance of life is necessary to the *abuse* of wealth, so *that* continuance may be endangered by *this* abuse. And if, in the midst of the *utmost* profusion of the means of subsistence, life itself is neither the effect nor the consequence of that abundance, it follows that it is the effect and consequence of something else, in the midst of that abundance as well as at any other time. Now, what can this be, but the good-will and pleasure of God, the author and giver of *all* life? from whom as the possession of existence was originally com-

municated to his creatures, so its continuance is prolonged to them solely by his forbearing to recall his own gift, which cannot fail to cease and be resigned, whenever he chooses to reclaim it.

When, further, it is considered, that this possible danger to the continuance of life in the midst of wealth, is urged as a dissuasive from the spirit of *undue* desire, described as above—a desire of wealth for its own or the possessor's sake, such as must terminate in its abuse—it will appear a reasonable inference, that the proper ground of danger to the immunity of life under such circumstances, is, lest the nature of these circumstances themselves should provoke the author of the gift of life to recall his own gift; that is, lest the abuse of wealth, which presupposes the possession of life, and consists in a certain mode and kind of existence, going on at the time—should lead to a punishment in kind, the withdrawing of that very existence, of which an unworthy use is made. If this be the truth intended to be impressed; viz. that the abuse of wealth endangers, in the way of penal retribution, the security of life itself; it makes no difference whether that danger be something inseparably attached to the abuse in question, or an immediate effect of the divine dispensations. If the former is only an appointment of Providence, it is as much judicial, as a special dispensation would make it; and it is as much a provision of God's moral government, though of regular occurrence—for the punishment of the misconduct of his creatures in this life, as his most extraordinary visitations would be.

Now wealth is represented in scripture as a gift of God, as well as life: and the abuse of *one* of his

gifts must have as natural a tendency to provoke the giver to withdraw it from the possessor, as that of another. But though the gift of wealth in itself is distinct from that of life, the abuse of the former gift cannot be distinguished from the abuse of the latter. The abuse of wealth necessarily implies one sort at least of the abuse of life; viz. that which perverts a gift, designed for so much more noble and generous purposes, to self-indulgence, luxury, riot, and intemperance. In the deliberate abuse of the gift of wealth, then, there is actually an abuse of another and a nobler gift; that is, a double abuse of *two* of the gifts of God is committed at the same time; both of an aggravated kind—and both consequently entitled to resentment; and either of them liable to be resented in kind, by taking away the gift which is the subject of the abuse.

Now to take away the gift of life, as a consequence of such an abuse, would necessarily involve the taking away the gift of wealth; as in fact of every other good, the enjoyment of which presupposes the continued possession of life: but to take away the gift of wealth would not necessarily entail the resumption of the gift of life. There are two modes then, of resenting the abuse of wealth, and the abuse of life which is involved therein; either by taking away the gift of wealth, but prolonging the gift of life, or by taking away the gift of life, and so resuming that of wealth. These two methods may be proper for different emergencies; but they cannot both suit to the same case. It is not the rule of the divine equity towards even the criminal part of its creatures, not to treat them with every forbearance and lenity for a time, which the

nature of the case will admit; nor to visit at once, with the utmost degree of severity, as if irreclaimable and not to be amended, an offender against the divine laws, whom a less degree of chastisement, like medicine, however unpalatable, administered in due proportions, might possibly have brought to repentance and reformed.

To take away the gift of wealth, then, sparing the possession of life, is the method which divine Providence adopts for the purpose of correction, and with a view to a further term of probation; when God who made rich, makes also poor, with the benevolent intention therein, that he who has made a bad use of riches, may make a better of poverty; and may regain by his behaviour in want, that place in the estimation of his Maker, which he had forfeited by his misconduct in plenty. To take away the gift of life, on the other hand, and with it every other before possessed and enjoyed in life, is a mode of resenting the abuse of its gifts, which the divine Providence can adopt only in the way of judgment—for the sake of penal retribution; when all hope of correction by chastisement, or reformation by forbearance, is vanished, and the criminal is too far gone in impunity, to deserve any further trial, and too hardened in guilt, to be amended by any further indulgence.

Now this is that ultimate danger to be apprehended from the abuse of wealth, which the nature of our Saviour's argument against the spirit of undue desire, supposes him to have had in view; viz. the possibility that such an abuse may provoke the Author both of that gift and of the gift of life, to resent it in the way of the extreme penalty; recalling the gift of life, which necessarily resumes the

gift of wealth, and not merely reduces to poverty, most justly so called, but renders the recovery of the offender impossible; bars all hope of his future restoration to favour, all prospect of change and amelioration in his circumstances to come. And, I think, it is further implied, that the worse the abuse of the gift of wealth—that is, the more abundant those means are, which the possessor nevertheless appropriates to no worthier or better an use, than the indulgence of his appetites in the pleasures of sense, or in any other of those enjoyments, carried to a voluptuous and riotous excess, which wealth has the power of commanding—it is such an abuse, as not only *may* justly provoke the Author of the gift to resume his own again, and to punish the abuse of it by recalling even the gift of life itself, but very probably *will* do so.

The various truths, that we have thus attempted to develope from the analysis of our Saviour's argument, are confirmed by the testimony of the parable; which we find immediately subjoined both to the admonition in general, against the spirit of undue desire, and to the reason in particular, by which the necessity of that caution against it was enforced. It is reasonable to conclude that the object of a parable, that is, of an *example*, so introduced, must have been to explain and corroborate the previous reasoning on the subject in question, by a case in point. If then, there is any correctness in the view which we have taken of the general drift of the caution against cupidity, and any truth in our statement of the particular grounds of the argument by which it is supported; we may expect the several conclusions, deduced from the examina-

tion of the argument, to be exemplified and illustrated in the facts and circumstances of the parable. After recapitulating, therefore, these conclusions in brief, I shall proceed to shew in what way they are implicitly recognised to be true, and are illustrated in detail by the representations of the narrative annexed.

First, then, the principle of undue desire was supposed to be such, as would lead of necessity to the abuse of wealth, when obtained; and to that kind of abuse which consists in the indulgence of self, or the gratification of the appetites of sense. The natural tendency of such a principle, if further enforced by a case in point, could be illustrated, therefore, only by some such an instance of its mode of operation: that is, an history applicable to the doctrine in question, and illustrating the practical effects of the principle by a matter of fact, must proceed on the supposition, and must supply the evidence, of an actual or an intended abuse of wealth, like this.

The possession of wealth being supposed the possession of a gift of God, it was to be expected that in an history applicable to this view of the possession, it would be represented or implied to be such; whence it would follow that the abuse of wealth in the instance given, would be an abuse of one of the gifts of God. The same things will hold good of the possession of life, as another of the gifts of God; which no just account of its origin and tenure could fail to suppose and to describe accordingly: nor consequently could represent it as abused in a case in point, without further implying that such an abuse incurred the crime of perverting and misapplying another of the gifts of God.

The abuse of any of his gifts naturally having a tendency to excite the displeasure of God, and to provoke him to punish the offence in kind, by the resumption of the gift abused; we might expect that in a parabolic example adapted to this view of the case, if any thing were supposed to be done by the proper agent, and suffered by the proper patient, in the way of penalty and retribution, it would be implied or described to be done and suffered, as an effect of the resentment of God for the abuse of one of his own gifts.

The specific offence of the abuse of wealth to the indulgence of the sensual appetites, entailing over and above the further crime of the abuse of life to unbecoming and unworthy purposes; the proper guilt contracted by the first of those offences, might be shewn to be resented in a given instance, by the proper punishment due to the latter; provided it were implied in the example adduced of the crime committed and of the punishment awarded to it—that the abuse of the gift of life was resented by a punishment in kind, the withdrawing of life itself—solely in consequence of an actual or a meditated abuse of the gift of wealth, as involving the further abuse of the gift of life.

The crime of the abuse of wealth being the most aggravated, and yet, as the natural consequence of the spirit of undue desire, the most likely to be committed, and to involve in its own guilt the further one of a flagrant abuse of the more precious gift of life—when the means of enjoyment were most plentiful, when the temptation was greatest, and the party actuated, or liable to be actuated by the spirit in question, was beforehand effectually gratified to

the utmost of his wish, in the possession of that very excess which he coveted so much; a rich man "furnished with ability," and perhaps with more than the ordinary degree of ability, to waste and misapply the gift of wealth, if he were so inclined, would be the most appropriate example that could be adduced, in confirmation of the previous doctrine, and in supplying the proof of each kind of abuse, both that of wealth and that of life, as involved at the same time one in the other.

The possible insecurity of the gift of life being necessarily to be taken into account, as directly opposed at all times to the probable security of the gift of wealth; an history adapted to this view of the relation between them, might be expected to turn on the exhibition of the opposition in question, by the most forcible contrast between certainty on the one side with uncertainty on the other—which could be furnished by a case in point. Nor merely so, but as the security of the possession of life was clearly represented in the general argument, as possibly the least then, when that of the possession of wealth seemed, in all probability, to be the greatest; the instance selected to illustrate this doctrine, must carry the proof of this anomaly still further, by citing the case of a rich man, tempted to the commission of the specific crime of the abuse of life through the abuse of wealth, by the well-founded assurance of the possession of plenty and abundance for years to come; yet all at once debarred from the power either of using or of abusing the gift of wealth, in the use or the abuse of abundance, by the withdrawal of the gift of life; that is, cut off from the power of longer enjoyment, at the

very moment when the means of it for the greatest length of time, seemed to be most within his reach.

This dispensation, were it to take place, being described, under the circumstances of the case, as the probable effect of the displeasure of God, for the abuse of one of his own gifts, and as a punishment inflicted in kind upon that abuse, by the recall of the thing abused; we should expect to see it represented in an actual instance of the effect, as proceeding directly from God, and as designed for a *penal* purpose; that is, not for correction or amendment, but for judgment; and as attended by consequences to the sufferer strictly *retributive*, that is, in making him poor who before was rich, and poor without the hope of change, or the possibility of recovering his former condition.

Let us proceed to consider, whether these antecedent presumptions of what would be the nature and tendency of an history, adduced as an example to illustrate the doctrines previously inculcated on the same points; are found to be confirmed by the facts of the subjoined parable, and by the inferences which may be drawn therefrom.

THE PARABLE, MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, MORAL, AND APPLICATION.

In the first place, the history contained in this parable, is the history of one who was rich; and if the absolute degree of his wealth be measured by a reference to the circumstances of his case at the time—it is that of one who was rich in more than the ordinary sense of the term. It is true, only one fact of his personal history is selected to be related in detail; but he was rich *before* the point of time when the parable begins its account of this

fact, and *at* that point of time he is represented as likely soon to become richer still. He was rich too, before in the same respects, in which he was about to receive an accession to his wealth; the nature of which, and the sources from whence it was derived, were always the same, though its actual amount might be greater at one time than at another. "The estate of a certain rich man brought "forth plentifully:" an introduction to the sequel of the narrative, and a preliminary description of the circumstances of the subject thereof, which may be paraphrased, without exaggerating the state of the case, as follows: There was a certain man, possessed of fields and vineyards, and enriched by their productions; whose estates on one occasion brought forth more abundantly than ever. And indeed, his barns or storehouses must have been previously well filled with the produce of former years; or there would have been no want of room in them, to dispose of the fruits of another.

We may take it for granted, that by this rich man himself, we are to understand some one individual of the nation of the Jews; some one who must be considered a countryman both of the speaker, and of the hearers, of the parable. It agrees with this supposition, that the particulars of his wealth, such as they are represented in the narrative, are all of a kind peculiar to a people like the Jews; among whom riches were principally, if not entirely, derived from the culture and productions of the ground: among whom, consequently, the diversity of external circumstances between different individuals, was chiefly discriminated by different proportions of the possession of one and the same spe-

cies of wealth, the *natural.* The richest individuals in such a community, would be only those who had the largest amount of flocks and herds; and reaped every year the greatest quantity of the natural productions of the earth, corn, wine, and oil.

Now if riches are obtained from such sources as these, and when acquired consist in such particulars as these; the acquisition of wealth of this kind, presupposes above all things the blessing and co-operation of God; and therefore the possession of wealth like this, ought to be resolved, above all things, into the favour and effect of his good providence in behalf of the possessor himself. The kindliness or unkindliness of seasons; the dispensation, in due proportions, of the necessary helps to vegetation, rain, light, air, and heat; the natural productiveness or sterility of the ground; the improvement of the one, or the correction of the other, by such means as nature supplies and human art and industry turn to the desired effect; being after all that man can contribute, the ultimate causes of the success or the failure of crops—of the abundance or scantiness in the returns which the earth makes by its productions, for the labour and expense bestowed on its culture—and therefore being the ultimate causes of *affluence* under all circumstances, considered as derived from such sources as these; there is no one variety or species of possessions which constitute riches, nor any one mode among the different methods of acquiring them, in which man can claim less for his own efficiency, or is bound to ascribe more to God.

Every description of wealth, indeed, is ultimately the gift of God; and in every mode of its acquisi-

tion human cooperation is but the instrumental, while the blessing of God is the efficient cause of the result. Some kinds of its acquisition, however, there are, in which the process appears to be left ostensibly to the instrument itself; and in which the part truly discharged by the author of those powers and faculties, with which the instrument works—and by the disposer of every thing around him—over which the instrument could exert no control for himself—in the way most conducive to the success of his efforts, by conspiring with them and seconding their effect—is not so overt and direct. But in that mode of obtaining wealth, which depends upon the laws of the material universe—on the œconomy of the vegetable kingdom—on the properties of the atmosphere and of the ground—or the like—so little can evidently be done by man for himself, and so much more must always be left to the God of nature; that the whole agency, from first to last, seems justly assignable to him: nor can any considerable share of the result, and much less the praise of an efficient, independent subserviency towards it, be claimed by man as his own, without usurpation as well as ingratitude.

We might argue, therefore, that this rich man being a Jew, could not be ignorant of the kind of wealth which alone was promised or permitted to Jews; nor consequently, of the source whence only it was to be obtained. He could not be ignorant, then, of the true source of his own wealth in particular: nor consequently could he, except deliberately, forget it, and think of ascribing it to any thing but its real author. Yet it is evident that he did forget it; and instead of referring the source of

his affluence, such as it was, to the blessing of God, and acknowledging with gratitude that all his possessions were but the gift of the divine bounty, he thought of attributing the merit of the first cause of all, as well as of appropriating the enjoyment of all, only to himself. In this frame of mind he speaks of the fruits of his grounds, as "*my* fruits;" and not in the natural language of a thankful piety, as the fruits which God had given him. In the same strain, he calls them, "his own productions, his "own good things"—and apostrophizes his soul with the terms of encouragement, "take rest, eat, drink, "enjoy thyself;" as if the pains and labour of the acquisition having been exclusively his, he was entitled to the fruits of the labour, and to the wages or reward of the pains, in the exclusive pleasure of the enjoyment likewise. It appears, then, that however richly the providence of God had supplied this one man with such good things of the present life as constituted abundance; he was capable of the first step necessary to the abuse of its gifts—a deliberate forgetfulness of the giver, and a previous unwillingness to allow him that share of the merit of the causation, and to pay his will that regard in the nature of the use and application, which the possessor of a gift is bound in justice and gratitude to ascribe and to render to its author, both as to the acquisition of it on the one hand, and as to the appropriation of it on the other.

In the prospect of an abundant harvest from his estates, the rich man is supposed to be debating within himself beforehand, in what way he should dispose of it; that is, what he should do to secure and lay up in store the additions to his wealth, which he hoped shortly to possess. But the purpose of his

deliberation does not stop with this consideration: for had it done so, it must be allowed there would have been nothing blamable in his conduct. A prudent solicitude to preserve and make the most of the blessings of God, however bestowed, so far from being wrong in any, is rather incumbent upon all, to whose lot they fall. Both a grateful sense of the bountifulness of the Giver, and a right estimation of the value of his gifts, require that they should be received with thankfulness, and husbanded with carefulness; and neither be rejected in the first instance, as not worth acceptance, nor be allowed to go to waste afterwards, for want of due thrift in their management; nor fail of their effect, and be perverted to wrong or inadequate uses, for want of prudence and judgment in applying them to better.

It appears, however, that the reason of the rich man's anxiety to provide betimes for the bestowal of the expected addition to his wealth, was not that he might take the necessary care of it, in order to turn it to the best account, but that he might longest and most effectually enjoy it to himself. For he proposes to take down his present storehouses, as too small to accommodate more than they already contained; and to replace them by larger, which should be competent to hold both what he before possessed, and what he expected to possess by and by, in addition to it[a]. And when all this had been

[a] Mr. Harmer indeed shews, from the report of modern travellers (vol. ii. 452—455. ch. x. Obs. xxx.) that one way of securing grain and other fruits of the earth, among the people of the east, at present, is by burying them in pits and caverns. This may well be the case among them now; and under certain circumstances, where concealment was an object, it was so anciently. But it would be absurd to suppose that the Jews never

done, he intended to say to his soul, "Soul, thou "hast many good things lying in store for many "years (*to come:*) take rest, eat, drink, enjoy thy-"self:" that is, he proposed to enjoy all as long as it should last, and to enjoy it exclusively as so much provision laid up for his private use, and therefore to be appropriated to himself. It appears, too, that the specific enjoyment on which his mind was fixed, was not only such as made it exclusive, and therefore liable to the charge of selfishness; but voluptuous and sensual—the indulgence of the carnal appetites in eating, drinking, and making merry: which is a selfishness of the worst description. In this scheme, then, of the proposed application of his future good things, it is superfluous to observe, there was nothing generous or liberal; much less pious or charitable. The whole scheme originated in the love of self, and found its effect in the gratification of the mere animal passions. Nor is it surprising, after all, that there should be no mention of communication to any, much less of division with the poor and needy, with the priest, the temple, or with God—in the plans of one, whose first consideration was his personal ease and enjoyment—the moving spring of whose desires and impulses, was the indulgence of the appetites of sense.

And though he is supposed to be deliberating with respect to a future emergency; viz. the use to which he should apply the addition to his wealth, and the increase of his means of enjoyment, which he shortly expected; yet the readiness with which he

used barns, built above ground. Those in the parable at least were certainly such; the terms καθελῶ and οἰκοδομήσω can be understood of nothing else.

comes to his final resolution, and the manner in which he purposes to appropriate his future abundance, are proofs of the habit and disposition of the man, and in what way he had been accustomed to spend his wealth heretofore. If he was rich beforetime, and was not merely beginning to be so now, he must have turned his riches to some use or other beforetime; and if he proposed to make such and such an application of them for the time to come, it is a presumptive argument that he knew of no better mode of using them, and had not been accustomed to make any better use of them, in time past. If he values the addition which he expected to be made to his possessions, chiefly because it would afford him larger and more permanent means of ministering to his own enjoyment; the principal excellence of riches, in his estimation, must always have been the facilities which they afforded for such an enjoyment. To deliberate, therefore, upon the mode of applying an increase of wealth, and with it the possession of greater means of indulgence —with this particular view of rendering it most subservient to his personal gratification; and to come to the resolution beforehand, of spending all in the carnal delights of eating, drinking, and making merry: were the acts of a man accustomed to such enjoyments, and prepared to esteem the possession of abundance, chiefly as the means of supplying the necessary gratification of desires, exclusively fixed upon the pleasures of sense, the delights of mere animal existence. It is no uncharitable conclusion, therefore, to infer from the conduct of the rich man, even in this isolated instance, that he is to be regarded as one whose habits and principles gene-

rally, predisposed him to be guilty of the abuse of wealth to its worst and most degrading purposes, in riotous living—in gluttony, intemperance, and sensual excess: who, in his regular mode of life had heretofore been guilty of such an abuse, and if he continued to live on, with the same means of abuse in his power, would continue to be guilty of it still.

Now, the particular kind of abundance possessed by this rich man, being in an especial manner, the blessing of God; he could not be guilty of a wilful abuse of his wealth, without being guilty of a wilful perversion of one of the most undoubted among the gifts of God. The fact of an intended abuse seems to be presumptively established against him; and in that case, it follows from the nature of the proposed abuse, that it would involve the perversion of another and a still greater gift of God, the gift of life; being in fact the intended prostitution of existence to the most ignoble purposes—the least worthy of the dignity of a rational nature—the pleasures of mere animal or brutish enjoyment. But that the perversion of any of his gifts, contrary to its proper end and design in being given by himself, has a tendency to provoke God to withdraw it, we have already observed; and that the gift of wealth may be withdrawn, without recalling the gift of life—but not the gift of life, without revoking the gift of wealth—that consequently, the former may possibly be done, if the object or effect proposed by the act is chastisement or correction, but the latter alone can take place, where the object is punishment and retribution—that the former, therefore, is to be expected only when some further trial is intended, and some future amendment is possible—but the latter, when the term

of probation is over, and all hope of amelioration is by the circumstances of the case precluded—has also been shewn.

Now the guilt of the rich man, supposing his conduct in the present instance, to have implied a systematic abuse of wealth of long standing, might so far be considered already sufficiently established. But when, in addition to the proof of his criminality supplied by his principles of conduct and his habits of life heretofore—as soon as greater means of indulgence seemed likely to be placed in his power, he is seen eagerly coming to the resolution beforehand of using those means also, in the same way in which he had, to all appearance, employed his former, viz. in the same enjoyment of himself—in the same luxurious and dissolute living, to which he had been heretofore accustomed—it must be confessed, that in behalf of a man so confirmed in his principles, and so addicted to his old course of life, any further trial with the possible chance of reforming and amending him, any suspension of the penal infliction to which he had justly rendered himself obnoxious, at least in the hope that he might yet avert it by a change of disposition and behaviour, would have been superfluous. The interference of the Deity himself, which takes place at this critical juncture, immediately after he has conceived his resolution, but before he has had time to act upon it—seems to intimate this truth. At this juncture in particular, must the necessary proof of his guilt—which required of course to be established, before he could be punished—have been considered complete. The divine forbearance, which spares the victims of its resentment as long as it

can, consistently with its justice, was arrived at its acme now, but not before. For the object of that interposition was clearly to defeat the resolution itself, even before it could be acted upon: and therefore it implies that the resolution was what God was especially displeased with, and what he interfered on purpose to prevent. Now the particular method of the interference was by resuming the gift of life. But where the end designed by the resumption of such a gift as that, is to prevent an intended abuse of the gift of wealth, it is as much judicial in its object with respect to one of these abuses, as it is precautionary with respect to the other. The resumption of the gift of life is at once a punishment for the projected abuse of the gift of wealth, and a precaution, adopted in time, to prevent a further abuse of the gift of life.

That the object of the Divine interference is rightly thus assumed, as expressly to disappoint the preconcerted plans of the rich man, and to punish too, the guilt contracted by their formation, with an exact adaptation of the letter of the retribution to the letter of the offence—seems to follow from the very language addressed to him on the part of the Deity; so pointedly opposed as it is, to the language just before addressed by him to himself. Thus, with regard to the presumed continuance of life—the man had been congratulating himself on the assurance of continuing to live for years to come; the Deity pronounces the term of his existence to be arrived, that very night. And with respect to the proposed enjoyment of his good things; the one had reckoned on their being exclusively his own, for years to come; the other describes them from that moment,

as any body's rather than his—as convertible to any use rather than the self-enjoyment of their owner at the time.

As, then, the secure retention of the gift of life was presupposed, all along, by the rich man, in the proposed application of his expected abundance —not so much from a conviction of the necessity, as from a presumptuous confidence in the certainty of that particular condition to the success of his future plans; so the resumption of this gift, with which the possibility of the abuse both of wealth and of every thing else which required for its effect the continuance of life, would of course cease—is the measure determined on by the Deity, to frustrate and disappoint his intention. And here we may observe by the way, that the possession of life also, which is truly as much a gift of God as wealth, is spoken of and alluded to accordingly: "O fool, this "night do they require of thee thy soul again." That which is *required again*—is demanded back or reclaimed by one from another—must be a donation or loan, which originally was given or lent by the former to the latter. The reference to the agents employed in making this requisition, or enforcing this demand of restitution, however indefinite, is clearly to be understood of the appointed ministers of death: but the command or authority, under which it is implied that even they are supposed to act, can be nothing but the will and pleasure of the Supreme God, the author and disposer of the gift of existence to all his creatures, in whose hands are the issues both of life and of death.

When, therefore, the life of the rich man is seen to be exacted from him, at the very time when

reckoning on the continuance of existence as matter of course, he designed to have made a worse use of it than before; or at least to have persevered in the same wilful abuse of it which he had begun and practised hitherto; the moral effect which is produced by such a dispensation, in the critical and well-timed prevention of a premeditated perversion of one of the chief gifts of God, may justly be considered an argument of the intention with which it was done; and may be resolved into a penal visitation of the providence of God, interfering at the proper moment to foil and resent the abuse of one of the greatest among its own blessings, which it both bestows for, and intends and expects to be applied to, very different purposes.

That the dispensation itself is a sudden event, the circumstances under which it takes place alone would suffice to prove. There is no conviction, which the catastrophe of the narrative, fatal as it is to its victim, so strongly impresses upon us, as this, of the real uncertainty of life, amidst circumstances of the greatest apparent security. The rich man was presuming on the continued enjoyment of existence, when the stroke of death was already raised against him, and only for a moment suspended before it took effect upon him. He was pleasing his imagination with the picture of ease and plenty for years to come, so agreeable to his wishes and inclinations—when he had not a night more to live. He was making himself as sure of living to enjoy his ample means, as of having means in abundance to enjoy, if he lived, when his candle was flickering in its socket, and his sands were almost spent; and every thing which he had or expected to have, was

about to be dashed from his grasp, for ever; leaving him to return to his native earth, as naked and destitute of all things, as when he came into the world from his mother's womb.

And hence, perhaps, it is, that in the apostrophe with which the Deity addresses him, he is characterised by the scornful epithet of ἄφρων, or *fool*, rather than by the more solemn and serious one of voluptuary, sensualist, or wicked—to which also his conduct was liable—as having been guilty of a palpable folly, not less than of a deliberate moral offence, in the conclusion to which he had come. The possession of riches is itself an uncertain thing; but the possession of life is much more so: and even when all doubt, or reason to doubt, seems to be removed with respect to the one, there must still be the same insecurity as ever respecting the other. Human calculation can estimate with tolerable exactness, the measure of human wants, and the quantum of the supply which they may require; and where the latter is at hand in sufficient abundance, there may appear to be no more reason for anxiety about the former. It was evident, then, that the rich man, surrounded by present affluence, or encouraged by the prospect of approaching abundance, might so far reckon with confidence on the possession of enough and more than enough, for years to come. But it was not so easy to foresee whether he should live long enough to enjoy it. Yet he calculates, as we perceive, more confidently, if possible, on the reality of the most precarious and uncertain of the requisite conditions to the execution of his future plans, than on that of the most indubitable and secure. In this therefore, the folly of his deliberations consisted—

that when forming a scheme for the future, he totally overlooked the most indispensable of all the elements in its realization and success; and reckoned upon that with the least hesitation and fear of disappointment, about which he ought to have felt the greatest misgiving and distrust.

The essence of folly, indeed, considered as the practical moral quality opposed to true wisdom, implies much more than this; of which too the rich man in the parable might be equally guilty: an ignorance of the nature of ends in general, as the objects of pursuit or aversion—what ought to be desired, and what ought to be avoided, as good or evil in itself, as better or worse in comparison of other things—and an ignorance of means, as instrumental to the attainment of the objects of pursuit—what should be done, or what should not be done, to make even the best and most desirable object our own. The end which the rich man proposed to himself by living longer, in the continued enjoyment of health and wealth, was such as shewed him not to be exempt from this practical folly, so opposed to true wisdom—in its most general sense; for it proved him to be ignorant of the true use and purpose for which the gift both of life and of wealth was bestowed, and to which it ought to be directed. But the specific instance of folly of which he was guilty, and with which we must suppose him charged in being designated by the Deity as a *fool*, is that which appears on the face of his recent deliberation, from the mode in which it was conducted; the folly of reckoning on the future with the same confidence as on the present. Even the general folly of the end which he proposed to himself by living longer, had

as it was, might have been somewhat palliated, had his resolution to eat and to drink, and to make merry for the time to come, been formed subject to the express reserve of his continuing to live all the while[b]. But in a question of practice which concerns the future; and especially such a question as relates to the *mode* of life proposed to be observed for the future—to overlook so essential a contingency as the possible insecurity of life itself; is an absurdity in deliberation, and in planning of schemes to be realized hereafter, of which downright infatuation only can be guilty.

Thus much, however, we may infer even from the folly of the deliberation itself; that if the person who is deliberating, entirely overlooks so important a requisite to the success of his future plans, there could have been nothing in his situation at the time, to bring it home to his recollection in spite of himself; to remind him of the uncertainty of life; and to raise a suspicion that possibly even his own end might be nearer than he thought or expected. We

[b] "Let us eat and drink," according to St. Paul, may be the profession of libertinism, and of those who have no hope except in this life; but with the qualification, "for to morrow we "die."

Ecclesiasticus v. 1: "Set not thy heart upon thy goods; and "say not, I have enough for my life."

—xi. 19: "Whereas he saith, I have found rest, and now "will eat continually of my goods; and *yet* he knoweth not "what time shall come upon him, and that he must leave those "things to others, and die." Cf. xxxi. 1—10.

Jeremiah xvii. 11: "*As* the partridge sitteth *on eggs*, and "hatcheth *them* not: *so* he that getteth riches, and not by right, "shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall "be a fool."

may presume then, that he was in the present enjoyment of perfect health and strength; and if, looking at the state of his circumstances abroad, he saw nothing but the comfortable prospect of ease and abundance and pleasure, for years to come; so if he turned his eyes upon himself, he could discover nothing in his own situation to alarm him for the continuance of life; no sensations of bodily pain; no traces of infirmity; no symptoms of disease or decay, to menace the stability of health and vigour, much less the forerunners of approaching death. The termination of his existence, under such circumstances, would be as extraordinary in itself, as unexpected by him; and like every other case of sudden death, properly so called, could be resolved solely into the interposition or visitation of God.

It appears moreover, that as the soul of the man was to be exacted from him, the moment his deliberations were over, and that too *that very night;* the time of his deliberations must have been the night. There is an historical beauty in this circumstance, if we look no further than the matter of fact itself; the night being proverbially the season of meditation and reflection, when subjects which particularly interest and occupy the mind, are most likely to occur to the thoughts, and may be most carefully pondered and considered, and most effectually decided and determined [c]. But it serves

[c] Suidas, Ἐν νυκτὶ ἡ βουλή· διὰ τὸ τὴν νύκτα κατὰ σχολὴν διδόναι λογισμοὺς, τοῖς περὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων βουλευομένοις.

Euripides, in his Hippolytus, supposes Phædra to say,

ἤδη ποτ', ἄλλως νυκτὸς ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ
θνητῶν ἐφρόντισ' ἢ διέφθαρται βίος. 375.

as if a train of moral reflections, like that which follows, could never have occurred to her so fitly, as by night.

other purposes, and more important than this. There is a moral fitness in it, as tending to illustrate the character of the deliberator himself, and to place in their true light the motives which actuated his deliberations. The disposal of his worldly goods, we may presume, must have been the engrossing subject of his waking thoughts, if it forms the sole business of his meditations by night: and such a mode of applying and enjoying them, as that which he resolves upon at last, must always have appeared the best in his estimation at any other time, if it is that which presents itself to his mind, and that which recommends itself to his choice, as preferable to all others, at such a season as this. This preliminary deliberation, too, in the first part of the night, evinces the grounds of that penal, retributive dispensation by which it is followed in the next; regard being had to the rules and process of the divine justice, in the estimation of guilt and the punishment of offenders, as contradistinguished to those of human. The faculty of human discernment is limited to the external conduct. It judges of principles by their effects, and not of effects by their principles. The justice of man, therefore, can take cognizance only of actions, and must wait for the overt act of guilt, before it can punish the criminal himself. But the discernment of God penetrating even to the thoughts, and discovering the overt act in the secret motive and first impulse to it, the design in his estimation is equivalent to the execution; and the same guilt

Epicharmus too, apud Phornutum *περὶ μουσῶν*, has the general maxim.

εἴ τέ τι ζητεῖς σοφὸν, τῆς νυκτὸς ἐνθυμητέον·
πάντα τὰ σπουδαῖα νυκτὶ μᾶλλον ἐξευρίσκεται.

is considered to be contracted, and the same punishment to be justly deserved, by the wilful conception, as by the wilful commission of a crime. Scarcely, then, had the rich man formed the resolution in question, and perhaps made an end of his meditations at that time, by composing himself to sleep; that is, scarcely was the *crimen delicti*, such as it would appear to divine justice, complete; when his soul is exacted from him, and he incurs the full penalty of his proposed abuse of the goodness and blessings of God, before he had yet taken a single step, to carry it actually into effect.

Lastly, that the dispensation in question is strictly penal and retributive, consisting in resuming, depriving, or taking away the very thing in whose abuse, or intended abuse—the crime which required to be punished, resided; and that as the means of preventing, as well as of punishing the crime itself—has both been already shewn, and may be further collected from the following reasons. When the soul of the rich man is spoken of as ready to be exacted, this ironical question also is supposed to be asked; in which there is an obvious reference to the occasion, design, and effect of his meditations just before; "The things which thou hast prepared, for what "shall they be?" With respect to the meaning of which question, it is indifferent whether the things which he had prepared, are understood of what he had already prepared, or what he expected shortly to prepare; provided that in either case the final end of the preparation was his own exclusive benefit and enjoyment in the application thereof. It is implied therefore, that as he had just before presumptuously calculated on riches and plenty for

years to come, so he was purposely now to be reduced for ever to poverty and want: as he had himself neither intended nor expected to impart a share of his ample means to any beside himself, so he should now leave them all to others, without any share in them himself: as he had reckoned on enjoying his good things exclusively, and by himself, they should now become any one's rather than his—they should serve for any purpose, and minister to any enjoyment, rather than to *his* pleasure and gratification, who was at present their owner.

It appears further, from the moral which our Lord himself subjoins to the narrative, "So *shall* "*be* he that treasureth up for himself, and is not "rich unto God," that this particular rich man stands only as the representative of a class; and that his offence was but one instance of the kind of crime, which might be committed by others, under circumstances similar to his. The case of this one rich man, therefore, is proposed as a warning to the rich in general; and the punishment which his offence is seen to have incurred, is a specimen of what might be expected by others in the like situation, if they should be guilty of the same. "So "*shall be* (or even, so *is*) the man, who treasureth "up," or "layeth in store for himself, and is not "rich unto God:" an assurance which implies first, the fact of some retribution in general, as the proper punishment of all offenders, who under the circumstances in which their offence should be committed, might resemble the rich man; and secondly, the fact of a retribution in kind, like that which he also is supposed to have undergone according to the representation in the parable.

Indeed, as the proper instance of the penal retribution which was due to the crime or misconduct of those, who should be guilty, as the rich man had been, of the offence specifically described by treasuring up for themselves—an offence, explained and illustrated by the end and design which *he* was seen to propose, in treasuring up—that is, bestowing and securing *his* own possessions—for a certain use and purpose in his own behalf—the least possible ill consequence which could be expected to result from it, must be the deprivation of that wealth, in amassing and reserving which, for their own exclusive use and enjoyment, the specific act of the offence would consist. Nor is this all. The deprivation of a thing abused may prevent the possibility of its being abused for the future; but it cannot compensate for the fact of its abuse for the past. It may justly be presumed, then, that although the proper retribution for the specific crime of such an offence as the abuse of wealth in time past, under the necessary circumstances of the case; will of course be preceded by the resumption of the thing abused, and by the consequent loss of the wealth itself to its possessor: it cannot stop there, but must include some further evil consequence to the author of the abuse, beyond that first step towards his punishment; and probably some evil much worse than it.

In like manner, though to be rich unto God must imply generally the true use and application of the gift of wealth, because it is opposed to treasuring up and being rich to the possessor's own self, which constitutes, as we have seen, its proper abuse; yet what the particular nature of that true use and application of riches is, does not appear, from the allu-

sion thereto at present. If, however, we consider that God is not, and cannot be, actually the possessor of those things in which the wealth consists, even when a person is said to be rich unto him; nor the person defrauded of them, when riches are supposed to be treasured and laid up in store for the use and enjoyment of the possessor exclusively; yet must be in some sense or other the object of *that* particular use of wealth which makes a man rich *unto him*, just as the possessor himself is, of that use of wealth which ensues when riches are laid up *for a man's self;* it will be an obvious inference, that the possession and use of wealth, which as it is well or ill applied, makes a man rich unto God but poor unto himself, in one case—or poor unto God but rich unto himself, in another—are to be regarded as the possession and exercise of a temporary trust, wherein the actual possessor in the person of a man, merely represents the virtual owner, who is God. If wealth, indeed, is the gift of God, as we have all along supposed, the state of the case, with respect to its tenure, could not possibly be otherwise represented; for the gifts of God are not bestowed except for a proper end and purpose, worthy both of the giver and of his gifts—nor therefore, without a liability to be accounted for. Nor is it indifferent to the giver of such gifts whether they are applied, after he has bestowed them, according to his intention in bestowing them, or not: nor does he, by bestowing them on his creatures, so entirely make them over to them, as to cease to retain any right in them himself, nor to reserve the liberty of exercising a proper jurisdiction and control, if necessary, over the receivers and possessors themselves.

The truth is, all the gifts of God to his creatures, of whatever kind, are loans rather than donations, and trusts rather than gratuities; the good use of which may be further rewarded, but the abuse, instead of empowering the party in fault to plead in his own excuse, that he was free to do what he pleased with his own, only entails the further crime, and renders him liable to the further guilt, of defeating the intentions of God, and bringing a calumny on his gifts; which in lieu of being a blessing both to the possessor and to others, and as such redounding to the praise and glory of their beneficent source, are by his misuse and perversion of them, in other words, his failure in the due discharge of the duties of his trust, converted into a curse, and made the means, contrary to their own nature, of a variety of evils, not less dishonouring to God than injurious to his creatures.

The proper reward or retribution, then, which may be expected at the hands of God, for the specific merit or demerit of the use or the abuse of wealth, is that which we may presume to await a steward at the hands of his master, as he has been faithful or unfaithful in the discharge of a delegated trust; as he has acted up to, or fallen short of, the just expectations of his superior in the exercise of his commission. That this is a correct representation of the doctrine of scripture, respecting the origin, the design, the use and application of the gift of temporal wealth, as a trust derived from God—to be exercised in the offices more especially, of piety and charity, with a view to his own glory and to the good of men, particularly of the poor and needy—and ultimately to be accounted for, in that capacity,

to him—will appear from other moral parables of our Saviour, which have yet to come under our consideration [d].

[d] Before we take our leave of the above parable, I cannot forbear to observe upon it, however short and simple it is, what an exquisite specimen it furnishes of the parabolic mode of instruction, not only in the matter, but in the manner of the narrative. How much is contained in its moral—how truly evangelical—how worthy of all men to be received and attended to, are the truths therein conveyed; it has been the object of the above exposition, however imperfectly, to show. And as to the beauty of the details; what, for example, can be more apposite, or more in unison with the character of the rich man, than the train of reflections which pass through his mind; what more lively and animated than the terms in which they are told! Τί ποιήσω κ. τ. λ. down to, καὶ ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου· ψυχὴ ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη πολλά· ἀναπαύου· φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου. What a crowd of pleasing images; what a tumult of hope and expectation; what confidence and presumption are implied in these words; and how forcibly contrasted with the event. Need I remind the reader how much the asyndeton of the construction adds to the force and animation of the description? So Euripides,

εὔφραινε σαυτὸν, πῖνε, τὸν καθ' ἡμέραν
βίον λογίζου σὸν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα τῆς τύχης. Alcestis, 805.

Nor is there any circumstance in the account, which may not very reasonably be supposed to form part of a real history; if we except the language ascribed to the Deity, εἶπε δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Θεός κ. τ. λ. I will not say that εἶπεν αὐτῷ here may mean, "said "of him," as well as "unto him;" which would imply merely that God was privy to his thoughts, or to what had just been passing in his mind; nor that this address, if actually made to him by the Deity, might be made in a dream: I will rather suppose that the whole transaction, of which this particular incident forms a part, belongs to a time when the Jews were living under an extraordinary dispensation, and every transgression received, or was liable to receive, an immediate recompense of reward. Under such a state of things, this kind of communication even from the supreme moral Governor, might not be unfrequently made to individuals guilty of peculiar offences: to certify them

of the punishment which they had thereby incurred, and which was about to be inflicted. Nor would this transaction, on that account, be less adapted to become the means of conveying a general moral lesson, to caution even those who though not placed under the same kind of dispensation, might yet be guilty of the same offence; which if it was likely to excite the anger of God formerly, was likely to do so still; if it was calculated to provoke the effects of his anger then, must have the same tendency now. The only difference in the circumstances of the two cases would be this; that the interposition of the Deity which might have been open, direct, and avowed before, would be more concealed and indirect now; yet might be just as much penal in its design and effect, as before.

PARABLES THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE SERVANTS LEFT IN WAITING FOR THEIR LORD. THE SERVANT LEFT INSTEAD OF HIS LORD.

LUKE XII. 22—48. HARMONY, P. IV. 32.

LUKE xii. 22—48.

22 And he said unto his disciples, " For this reason I say to
" you, Take no thought for your soul, what ye may eat; nor
" for your body, what ye may put on you. 23 The soul is more
" than its subsistence, and the body than its clothing. 24 Con-
" sider the ravens, that they sow not, neither do they reap: for
" whom there is not storeroom, nor barn: yet God feedeth
" them. How much are ye rather better than the fowls! 25 And
" which of you, taking of thought, is able to add one cubit to
" his stature? 26 If then ye are not able *to do* even that which
" is least, why do ye take thought about the things besides?
" 27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, nor do
" they spin; and I say unto you, not even Solomon in all his
" glory clad himself as one of these. 28 But if God arrayeth
" in such wise the grass which to-day is in the field, and to-
" morrow is cast into an oven; how much rather you, O ye of
" little trust! 29 And do not ye seek what ye may eat or what
" ye may drink: and be not of wavering mind. 30 For all
" these things do the nations of the world seek after: but your
" Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31 Only
" seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be
" added unto you.

" 32 Fear not, my little flock: for your Father hath been
" well-pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your pos-

" sessions, and give *them as* alms; make unto yourselves purses
" which grow not old, a treasure in heaven, that is not to be
" forsaken, where thief approacheth not, neither doth moth de-
" stroy: 34 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be
" also.

" 35 Let your loins be girded round about, and *your* lamps
" burning, 36 and yourselves like unto men who are waiting for
" their lord, when he shall come back from the wedding feast;
" that when he is come and hath knocked, immediately they
" may open unto him. 37 Blessed *shall be* those servants, whom
" their lord, being come, shall find waking. Verily I say unto
" you, He will gird himself about, and make them sit down to
" meat, and will come forward and minister unto them. 38 And
" should he come in the second watch, and should he come in
" the third watch, and find *it* thus, blessed are those servants.
" 39 And this ye know, that if the master of the house were
" ware at which hour the thief is coming, he would have
" kept awake, and not have left his house to be dug through
" (to be broken into). 40 Therefore, do ye also become pre-
" pared; for at what hour ye are not thinking *so* the Son of
" man is coming."

41 And Peter said unto him, "Lord, speakest thou this pa-
" rable with reference to us, or even with reference to all?"
42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise
" steward, whom his lord shall appoint over his servants, to give
" the allowance of provision in due season? 43 Blessed *shall be*
" that servant, whom his lord, being come, shall find so doing.
" 44 Of a truth I say unto you, he will appoint him over all his
" possessions. 45 But if that servant should say in his heart,
" My lord is long in coming; and should begin to beat the
" men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat and to drink
" and to become drunken; 46 the lord of that servant shall
" come in a day which he expecteth not, and at an hour which
" he knoweth not, and shall cut him off, and set his portion
" among the unfaithful.

" 47 Now that servant, who knew the will of his own lord,
" and made no preparation, neither did according to his will,
" shall be beaten with many *stripes:* 48 but he who did not
" know *it,* yet did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with
" few stripes. And unto whomsoever much hath been given,

"much shall be required from him: and to whom *they* have "committed much, of him they will ask the more exceed- "ingly."

PRELIMINARY MATTER.

THE third general division of the discourse extends from verse 22—40; and may be considered as one whole, because it was delivered without interruption, until the point of time when Peter put the question, recorded in verse 41. Regard, however, being had to the obvious distinction of its topics, which are not the same throughout, it admits of being distributed into two halves, one from verse 22—34; the other from verse 35—40, including the first portion of the parabolic matter, which we have next to consider.

On the first of these subdivisions we may remark, first, that so much of it as is comprehended between verse 22 and 31, and even the remainder of it, from verse 32—34, occurred substantially before, in St. Matthew's account of the first sermon upon the mount[a]; and so far was repeated on the present occasion. In considering, therefore, what was now said we are at liberty to avail ourselves, if need be, of the light which may possibly be thrown upon its sense, by what was said in reference to the same subjects before. In the next place, it is evident that, whereas our Lord, up to the close of the parable last considered, had been speaking to the people, he begins now to address his own disciples, and for some time after confines his discourse to

[a] Matt. vi. 25—34. and 19—21. Harm. P. ii. 23.

them. It was to these in particular that he began to speak originally; and to these that he had continued to address himself, until he was interrupted by the man from the multitude. In resuming his discourse to the disciples, then, at this point of time, he was so far resuming the original plan and design of his sermon; and it is not less observable that the subject of the recent address to the people themselves, that is, the very interruption which his sermon had experienced, is the means employed in connecting the sequel of his discourse, as specially applicable to his own disciples, with the preceding part of it, as intended for them also.

It is evident that the train of reflections which follows from this point of time, though directly addressed to the disciples, is ushered in by a reference to what had just been said to the people; Διὰ τοῦτο ὑμῖν λέγω: "For this reason I say unto you;" that is, "*because* such and such is the case in ge- "neral, *therefore* I say unto you in particular." It seems to me, that this reference cannot so naturally be understood either of the particular declaration last subjoined to the parable by way of moral, or even of the parable itself—as of the general caution to beware of the spirit of undue desire, and of the reasons on which that caution was founded, which preceded: it being evident as to the particular observation which summed up the parable, that it was intended to illustrate and apply the parable, just as much as the parable itself to illustrate or explain the preliminary caution.

If this be the case, the general ground of the precepts which begin now to be addressed to the disciples, must be the necessity of the same or a similar

caution for them, as for the people at large, but founded on reasons the truth of which made it as specially applicable in some sense to them, as the reason already considered, had made it generally so to the people at large. The resumption therefore, of the thread of our Lord's discourse would thus be effected with no violence of transition; and should it further appear, that even the general topic of the previous address to the people, is prosecuted, only to be applied to the disciples with a peculiar and exclusive reference to them—our admiration of the happiness of the transition will be proportionably increased; because, while the same particular argument continues to be enforced, the design and intention of the discourse from the first, which we have seen was exclusively meant for the disciples, will be resumed and enforced also.

The method and distribution of the component parts of this division, too, resemble those of the divisions which have preceded; so far as to consist of the statement of precepts or cautions, on the one hand, and of the proper arguments by which they are rendered binding, on the other: with this difference, however, in the particular drift of the general statements themselves, that some of them concern a certain principle of action, and the rest, its natural, practical effects. One part of the discourse, therefore, is directed to the eviction of the principle, the other, to the designation of its effects; the former, if I mistake not, from verse 22—31, the latter, from 32—34.

This general principle, thus found to be inculcated as the proper spring or peculiar motive of action which was to regulate accordingly the conduct of the hearers, that is, the disciples of our Lord

himself, under particular circumstances; is the principle of an exclusive reliance on the care and providence of God, for what they would otherwise be obliged to procure and provide for themselves—the supply of the necessary wants of life. The practical consequence to their conduct, to which they are considered especially bound, as to the natural effect of an exclusive reliance on the care of Providence in their own behalf—is the obligation to use and dispose of those means in behalf of others—under the conviction that they were no longer necessary to themselves—which without that conviction, they must have considered necessary, and would have been obliged to reserve, and to appropriate, for their own support. The former is confirmed by a variety of pertinent arguments, which leave no doubt of the truth and reasonableness of the principle of action; the latter is illustrated by a variety of apposite modes of describing its operation, which fully clear up, and specify intelligibly, what ought to be its direct, legitimate effect in practice.

With regard to the proper object of this reliance on the one hand, in the presence and possession of which, as an habit of mind, the power and activity of the principle, in its influence to a corresponding mode of conduct, are supposed to consist; it is represented as the daily supply of the necessities of nature—as the constant possession and enjoyment of whatever is requisite to the possession and continuance of *life*, in the ordinary sense of the term. Now as the possession and continuance of mere life or animal existence, depend upon the union of σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴ, "of body and soul;" that is, of body and the *animal* principle of the human soul, as contradis-

tinguished to the *spiritual;* the wants or necessities of mere existence may be reduced to the two general particulars of τροφὴ καὶ ἔνδυμα, "of food and "clothing;" as virtually comprehending every thing, necessary to the soul as such and to the body as such, in their present state of existence—because actually the two things which are most indispensable to the being and well-being of both; food, as the most essential to the wants of the soul, and clothing, as the most needful for the necessities of the body.

With regard to the specific object of the practical directions, on the other hand, as proposed to the observance of persons supposed to be actuated by such a principle as that of an absolute reliance on the care of Providence in their own behalf; it is, to inculcate a sense of the duty and propriety of alienating every thing, which under ordinary circumstances would be the means and instrument of procuring the supply of their natural wants in behalf of its possessors, as unnecessary and superfluous for any such purpose as that, but still to be disposed of in some way agreeable to its natural use and application; and therefore, exclusively for the benefit of others, because no longer for that of its possessors. These means and instruments, under ordinary circumstances, it is manifest, are money or property; whatever, in short, is known by the name of wealth or possessions in general: and the object of the practical rules of duty subjoined to the eviction of the general principle of conduct, is to impress upon the hearers the obligation of making that use of money or property, in behalf of others, as no longer necessary to their own support, which without an

absolute reliance on the care and providence of God for themselves in particular, they must naturally have made of their own means, for the supply of their own wants.

Now they, who are required to place an entire dependence on the care of God for a certain purpose, are of course required to renounce all dependence upon themselves, at least with a view to the same effect; and they who are required to renounce all dependence upon themselves, for the supply of their own wants, on the strength of a persuasion that they may confidently look to God for it—and who, in the consciousness of that conviction, are supposed to be further obliged to part with all that they possessed or might possess, in behalf of others, which under ordinary circumstances, they must have reserved for their own support; are to be considered as placed, and as acting like men who are conscious of being placed, not under the ordinary, but under the extraordinary, providence of God.

If then, it can be shewn that the arguments which enforce the eviction of the principle, on the one hand, are such as necessarily imply an absolute and total reliance upon God, and as absolute and total a renunciation of reliance on themselves, for this particular purpose, the due supply of the necessaries of life; and that the precepts which inculcate the practical consequences of the principle, on the other, go to the extent of enjoining the total and absolute resignation of property—supposed to be previously possessed, and previously available to the support of its possessors—for the benefit and advantage of others, as no longer necessary for their own; it will follow that the disciples of our Lord, who

are addressed in this instance as the persons required to entertain the conviction on the one hand, and to act up to its practical obligations on the other, are addressed as persons who knew already, or should know hereafter, that they were placed under the protection of an extraordinary Providence; which by relieving them of all care in their own behalf, would leave them free to act as the reason of the case might require, with regard to the disposal of their property in behalf of others; and make it incumbent upon them so to do.

Our attention therefore, must be directed to the proof of these two assumptions, with a view to shew the truth of the consequence resulting from them also, in describing and characterising the particular situation of the hearers immediately concerned in receiving such assurances, and observing such directions; if the latter were ever to be acted upon in the strength and persuasion of the former. It is necessary only to premise, that as the object of the reliance prescribed, whether it be upon God or on themselves, is restricted to the supply of the most indispensable of the wants of life; and that of the practical directions resulting from it, is simply the disposal in behalf of others, as no longer necessary for themselves, of those means, which, without good reason to depend on the care and providence of God in their own behalf, the possessors must have appropriated to the supply of their own wants; the conclusion deducible from such premises, respecting the situation of the parties addressed, supposes them to be actuated by such a principle, no further than as authorized to rely upon an extraordinary providence for the provision of the simplest and most

essential of the necessaries of life; nor to be bound by the obligation to dispose of their property in any other way, further than as that was the natural, practical result of the assurance of an extraordinary provision to be made and expected in their own behalf, for such a supply of the wants of life, independent of themselves, as should go to that extent, but no further.

In establishing the truth of the first of these assumptions, I shall consider first the statement, construction, and extent of the general principle itself; and then the particular reasons by which it is enforced.

Now *this* statement is so expressed, that the general principle of the assurance involved in it cannot be supposed to imply less than a total abandonment of all personal care and concern about themselves, on the part of those who are required to be actuated by it; nor consequently, less than an absolute, unconditional reliance on something else. "For this reason I say to you, Take no thought "for your soul, what ye may eat; nor for your "body, what ye may put on." And again; "And "do not ye seek what ye may eat, or what ye may "drink: and be not of wavering mind." The command in both these instances is positive and peremptory. It inculcates a specific duty not to take thought, not to seek or inquire, for such and such things, without exceptions, limitations, or qualifications; without defining the mode or degree, within which such taking of thought, or such seeking, was to be restricted. It is not the taking of thought even in a moderate, and much less in an immoderate sense, but the taking of thought in any sense at all,

for the particular purpose of procuring the wants of life, which the words of the prohibition, as they stand, must be acknowledged to forbid.

It may be answered, perhaps, that the original term, which we render *taking of thought*, implies of itself such a degree of care or concern as is unnecessarily anxious, and immoderate; and therefore that the prohibition is levelled against such a degree of it as that. But for this supposed meaning of the original verb, I find no authority either in the etymon of the word itself, or in the ordinary instances of its use and application. The root of the verb in Greek is merely a noun which denotes care, concern, or trouble, in general, whether accompanied with the perception of uneasiness and anxiety or not; and the verb derived from it can mean no more than the exertion or feeling of such a care, concern, or trouble, whether with or without the further sense of personal anxiety and solicitude about its object [b]. It

[b] That no particular stress is necessarily to be laid on the word *μέριμνα*, (whence *μεριμνάω*,) appears from the following instances:

. . . . κλαγγαίνεις δ' ἅπερ
κυὼν μέριμναν οὔποτ' ἐκλιπὼν πόνου.
Æschyl. Eumenides, 131.

εἰσὶν γὰρ οἵ σου, κἂν ἐγὼ θυραῖος ὦ,
μέριμναν ἕξουσ'. Euripid. Heraclidæ, 342.

. . . . εἰ γὰρ ἕξομεν
κἀκεῖ μερίμνας οἱ θανούμενοι βροτῶν, κ', τ. λ. Ibid. 592.

Cf. Ion. 247. 407. Andromache, 970. Orestes, 622.

. . . . χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας.
Hesiod. Opera et Dies, 176.

εἴη μοι πλουτοῦντι κακῶν ἀπάτερθε μεριμνῶν
ζώειν ἀβλαβέως, μηδὲν ἔχοντι κακόν.
Theognis, 1149.

αἰεὶ

does not necessarily denote an immoderate degree of care, nor a corresponding degree of anxiety and uneasiness. It expresses the act of caring or being concerned about something, absolutely; but as to the degree of personal feeling which enters into that care and concern, its meaning is neutral.

To allow of the utmost that might be inferred even in an extreme case, from the connexion of the verb with its root, it would still denote only such a degree of care about any thing, as was perhaps accompanied by doubt, uncertainty, and distraction of thought; that which, for instance, might arise from a sense of the constant want of the necessaries of life, attended by an ignorance where to find them, and by a perplexity about the means of procuring them. But this would be a construction of its meaning in the present instance, which instead of disproving the inference I am endeavouring to draw from the language of the precept, would rather support and confirm it. If the object of the assurance was to relieve the hearers from all sense of a natural anxiety about themselves, under such circumstances as would otherwise occasion it; what was more likely to produce that effect, than to tell them that they might rely with confidence on another, who was both able

αἰεὶ μὲν φρένας ἀμφὶ κακαὶ τείρουσι μέριμναι.
Mimnermus, Fragm. i. 7.

κουφὰς δὲ διδοῖ ποθέοντι μερίμνας.
Theocritus, Idyll. xvii. 52.

We see thus, that epithets are combined with the word, which qualify the nature and degree of the care in question denoted by it, accordingly; and that consequently, without such specific additions and characteristics, the word itself would denote neither a *light* degree of care nor an *heavy* one; neither an *evil* care nor a *good* care.

and willing to take that anxiety upon himself, and to provide for their wants, without any trouble or concern of their own?

If we refer to St. Matthew's account of the same injunctions, as delivered on the former occasion, it will appear that the prohibition of taking thought about the ordinary wants of nature, was stated then also with the same positiveness, absoluteness, and generality of the expressions, as now. We may argue from this coincidence not only in the sense, but likewise in the letter, of the same doctrine, as delivered on two several occasions—in favour of its literal construction alike upon each. If not only the substance of the same sentiments, but even the expressions, are a second time repeated, this is a presumptive proof, that the meaning of the speaker was the same on each occasion; that his language, in neither instance, was to be understood as signifying either more or less, than it appeared to do.

Had our Saviour so expressed himself on the former occasion, that his doctrine might have been liable to some misconstruction of its proper drift and application, (could such a supposition be admissible, even as a possible case, of teaching which proceeded from him,) he had now an opportunity of guarding against the same ambiguity of his language, and the same misapprehension of his meaning, by stating the point of duty more clearly and precisely, than he had done before; of which we may justly presume that he would have availed himself accordingly. More especially, if the liability of his doctrine to misconstruction before, had consisted in the possibility of such injunctions being understood *absolutely*, as were intended only *relatively;* and

had the particular defectiveness of his language on that occasion, been due to the absence of such exceptions, distinctions, and limitations, as must always have been wanted to define the scope and application of precepts, delivered generally, yet not meant to be received and applied in their utmost extent; it is reasonable to presume, that he would have supplied the omission on this second occasion; and not have left the point and article of the duty, as intended to be declared and stated by him, open to the same mistake as before, for want of the necessary explanation and qualification. That he does not do this—but that he repeats even with more absoluteness and peremptoriness of manner, what had been said with no restriction or reserve, in reference to the same subject, before; is a sufficient reason for inferring that his language stood in no need of correction or limitation either on the former occasion, or on this; that he meant to be understood and expected to be understood, on both occasions, to the utmost extent that the simple construction of his words would admit of.

It is, in my opinion, a dangerous and truly objectionable principle on which to proceed either in ascertaining the speculative doctrines, or in defining the practical duties of revealed religion; to assume that the words of scripture in a given instance, and with reference to the particular article of faith or moral obligation, dependent upon them, were ever intended to mean either more or less than to the common sense of the great bulk of mankind, (for whose benefit and instruction they were intended,) when properly exercised upon them, they appear to mean, or can really be shewn to mean. Nor do I

know of any way wherein the common sense of the great bulk of mankind can ordinarily be exercised upon the words of scripture, to determine their meaning, except by applying to its language the same criterion by which it judges of the sense of words in general; which is their natural, obvious, and primary construction, according to the rules and idiom of the language or dialect, in which they happen to be expressed.

To adopt any other method of arriving at the true sense of scripture but this, is to substitute an indefinite and capricious standard of interpretation, taken from I know not what imaginary notions, and preconceived opinions, of the interpreter himself; and consequently of as many kinds as there can be peculiar principles and notions of different expositors—all equally arbitrary and precarious, and all equally unsatisfactory to any but those who first set them up and apply them. If there is any one principle of interpretation, which from the nature of the case is not liable to vary; which is founded in the reason of things, and cannot accommodate itself to the particular tastes or prejudices of individuals; in the use and admission of which persons of every persuasion might be capable of concurring, and which would lead all, if they applied it rightly, to similar conclusions; which is consequently the least likely to fail of the desired effect, and therefore we may presume was of all others, intended to be our guide and director in arriving at the knowledge both of what we are required to believe, and of what we are bound to practise; it appears to me to be this, that we take the words of scripture as we find them; that we endeavour to ascertain their true, grammatical

sense, whether in the Old or the New Testament, in the first instance, and then receive the truths which are thereby conveyed, whether articles of faith or rules of practice, according to the plain and simple and obvious meaning of the language itself.

In what way, might we ask, has it pleased the Spirit of God both under the Old and the New dispensation to convey the knowledge of his will to his moral and responsible creatures, whether through the instrumentality of prophets, or by that of apostles; whether to their own contemporaries, or to future generations? By the use of language: by the use of the same medium through which men converse with one another, and make known their thoughts to one another; by the intervention of spoken or of written propositions—of the former, for the benefit of contemporaries, of the latter, for that of posterity. How then shall we judge of the meaning of language, as pronounced by the mouth of an inspired teacher, or as dictated by the pen of an inspired writer, except as we should judge of it, when employed as the ordinary means of conversation, or oral communication between one man and another, or as the established, and in fact, the only possible mode of recording for the benefit of posterity, and transmitting to future ages, the thoughts and sentiments of a mere human writer?

Now what inconsistency must there be in supposing the same medium of communication to be of necessity employed, when God converses with his creatures, as they themselves employ in communicating with each other; yet one rule of interpretation to be proper for the latter, and another for the former?

While the medium or instrument of the communication is the same, the manner of applying it, and the mode of interpreting it, must be and ought to be the same. If we read an ancient author, for example Thucydides or Sophocles, our first business, in order to understand his meaning, is to be able to construe his language; and for the process of construing his language, there are fixed rules and directions, determined by the genius of the language itself, in the admission and observance of which all scholars are agreed. When we have mastered this preliminary difficulty, no one doubts that he has ascertained the sense and meaning of his author, in a particular instance, who has ascertained the legitimate grammatical sense, the obvious and primary meaning, of his words.

The same rule of proceeding ought to be applied to scripture, especially in its moral or didactic parts. We are bound to ascertain in the first place, the grammatical sense and construction of its propositions, according to the genius of the Greek or of the Hebrew language; and when we have done that, we are authorized to conclude that the meaning implied in that grammatical sense and construction, as it obviously appears to be, so actually is, the true. Every one may concur with equal reason in this meaning; for if they understand the language aright, and apply its rules aright, it must and it will appear one and the same to all. If we once take the liberty of departing from this standard, and allow ourselves to suppose that the words of scripture, in a given instance, whatever they may appear to be, and whatever in their simple grammatical sense they would

be construed to mean, may yet denote something else; we open the door to endless confusion and perplexity [c].

If then we meet with propositions in scripture, of a moral or practical nature, the grammatical sense of which it is easy to ascertain, and the meaning of which, when so ascertained, is found to be of a nature that might readily have been mistaken, if it was not intended to be understood as it is ex-

[c] I am speaking of the moral and doctrinal parts of scripture, when I contend for the necessity of receiving and construing its words, according to this simple and obvious law. I am not speaking of its prophetical or allegorical parts. The *grammatical* sense of a given proposition, and the *real* sense, may not necessarily be the same thing. The words which express the proposition may require to be construed in such and such a way, so as to make such and such a meaning; yet that sense may not convey the real meaning of the proposition after all. This distinction, however, between the *grammatical* sense and the *real* sense, can hold good only in those cases where the *letter* of the text is one thing, and the *spirit* is another; where consequently the obvious, primary, and grammatical meaning of the words is symbolical and figurative: in other words, it can hold good only in the prophetical and allegorical parts of scripture. Even in these cases themselves, it cannot justly be deemed that the obvious and grammatical sense is not the *first* to be *true*—the first that was *intended* at least—whatever further meaning that first intention itself may be subservient to. But there cannot, or at least there ought not, ever to be this kind of opposition between the primary and secondary intention, between the grammatical sense and the real meaning, of the simply moral and doctrinal parts of scripture. In such parts of revelation the grammatical sense, and the real sense, both ought to coincide, and we may take it for granted always were intended to do so. There can never be one rule or standard of interpretation for the *grammar*, and another for the *sense* of such propositions, as there must be, if what they cannot but be *construed* to say, is not supposed to *express* what they *mean*.

pressed—that is, unless it had been guarded and restricted accordingly; which it would have been easy to qualify even as they are stated, by the addition of the necessary limitations, or to have expressed originally in a manner equally agreeable to the genius of the language, and much more secure from the possible danger of misconstruction; which, nevertheless, are neither so qualified as they stand, nor yet so differently expressed as not to require qualification—we ought not to doubt that they were purposely stated as they are, and were always intended to be received as we find them. It matters not whether they appear to contain more or to contain less, in the particular instance, than we expected; to overstate a particular doctrine, in our apprehensions, or to understate it. They mean neither more nor less in the given instance, than as measured by themselves, and as judged of by their own grammatical testimony, they are seen to mean. It is wresting and torturing scripture, to make it signify that which it was never intended to do; it is exaggerating it, to make it signify more than it was designed to signify; it is defrauding and detracting from it to make it signify less; it is dealing unfairly by it, and falsifying it more or less, to make it do any of these things. If the words of our Saviour, then, which inculcate on those addressed, the duty of taking no thought about such and such things, are so couched as to prohibit it not *in* a certain degree, nor *after* a certain manner, but in *any* degree and after *any* manner at all; the natural inference from them is, that in respect of the persons addressed at least, it was a positive duty to take *no* thought about those things at all; to consider the

prohibition as applicable to themselves, absolute and exclusive.

It will be admitted, at least, that as the words appear, so they might be understood, to contain a prohibition of this peremptory kind: it will be admitted also, that whether intended to be received with certain limitations, restrictions, and reservations or not, they have no such limitations, restrictions, and reservations actually subjoined to them, either on this occasion or on the former. Were they, indeed, really intended to be taken in their widest acceptation, all this becomes consistent. There is no contradiction between the apparent meaning and the real intention of the precepts in either instance: there was no necessity for explanation, restriction, or limitation, because no explanation could make words clearer, whose language was already as precise and definite as language ought to be; and no restriction or limitation could subsequently be thought of, where none was originally contemplated. But were they not really intended to be taken in their widest acceptation, then there would be a contradiction between the language and the sentiments of the speaker, which would make him say one thing and mean another—on a question too of *practical* obligation; a contradiction which we cannot suppose that our Saviour could unintentionally, and much less intentionally, leave unexplained. There would be a probability of his hearers mistaking if not the general nature, at least the particular extent, of their duty in this instance—to which we cannot suppose that they could purposely have been left by *him* at least, exposed.

It is especially incumbent on practical direc-

tions as defining principles of action, and prescribing modes and regulations of conduct, to be carefully, cautiously, and clearly expressed; in order that they may be understood according to the real truth of their import, and applied according to the real extent of their obligation. If this is not the case, instead of instructing the hearers on the material points of duty, they may leave them under greater perplexity about them, than before; for in questions of moral obligation, where the mind of the responsible agent is not enlightened with the plenitude of knowledge, an hint by the way thrown out, or a glimpse casually caught of duty, may be quite enough to make it uneasy, in the consciousness of being morally obliged to something, but with an equal consciousness of doubt and uncertainty, about the particular subject of the obligation: just as an object, that would be invisible in total darkness, may yet be visible in the faint glimmering of twilight, but will be only imperfectly and indistinctly so; and because it can neither be entirely overlooked, nor yet fully and distinctly perceived, it will be more likely to be mistaken, and more adapted to excite terror and alarm in the beholder, on that very account. Such indefinite apprehensions of the rule of duty are little better safeguards from error, or surer guides to rectitude of practice, than absolute ignorance would be; for men can no more see their way with too little light, than with none at all; and without intending it, are not less liable to go astray with an imperfect idea of their duty, than if they were entirely unconscious of it. Rules of duty, too, in reference to questions of practical obligation, which are *over stated*, that is, inculcate more than

is really incumbent on moral agents to observe and practise; by being unqualified and unrestricted, yet literally obeyed and applied, must lead in some degree to the breach of that very obligation, which they were intended to enforce. Right action lies midway between the two extremes of too much and too little; and if it is not consistent with strict rectitude of practice, to fall short of a certain point, neither is it, to go beyond it. The moral character of every action depends on a variety of circumstantial relations; to the accurate proportions of each of which to that just degree which constitutes the point of excellence, the presence of too much will make as great a difference, as the absence of enough. A man who was anxious to practise the duties of liberality, would err as considerably, and act a part as foreign to the character of that virtue, by indiscriminate profusion, as an opposite agent would do by absolute stinginess. Nor is it possible, under any circumstances, to mistake the true bounds of positive practical duty, and the consequent bounds of positive moral obligation, without incurring some serious ill consequence either to the agent himself, or to others: neither of which things can be the result of just rectitude of conduct, of correct principles of duty, and right ideas of their application—while the chief distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, even in the present state, is both *practical* and *personal* alike; and while the natural tendencies and legitimate effects of each of the former of these things, are beneficial both to the agent and to others, and those of the latter are the reverse.

It is still more indispensably necessary, that *new* principles of duty, *new* ideas of moral obligation,

new rules and maxims of conduct—principles and duties before unheard of as binding in obligation; rules and maxims never before prescribed as necessary to regulate practice—nor merely so, but rules and maxims until then, regarded in a totally different light; as the very opposites of positive duty; as identified with no ordinary principle of conduct or motive of action; as enforced by no received and unquestionable ground of previous obligation; as repugnant to men's former notions in theory, and alien from men's former habits in practice; as contradictory to all those views and considerations of prudence, right reason, expediency, and probability, which by common consent are allowed to direct the judgment and to actuate the conduct of men in the ordinary affairs of life—more especially necessary it is, that such principles of duty, and such maxims of practice as these, should be clearly expressed and well ascertained—if they are to become binding on the consciences, and instrumental in regulating the behaviour, of moral agents. No doubt, or ambiguity should be suffered to obscure the meaning of such and rules duties as these, either as to what they are, or as to what they prescribe; either how they are to be understood, or how they are to be applied.

Now a command, addressed to any description of persons, which required them to renounce all dependence on themselves—on their own ability, care, and exertions; their own foresight, prudence, and precautions; with respect to this special business, the maintenance and support of life in the ordinary way—the provision of every thing necessary to the being and well-being of their own souls and bodies, in

the present life, as usually left to men themselves; and to depend entirely on the care and protection of God, to be exerted in an extraordinary manner, in order to do the same things for them which they must otherwise have done for themselves—was clearly a command, which if literally to be understood, was such as we have supposed; a command never before heard of—calculated to raise expectations uncountenanced by any presumption from reason or probability; contradicted by experience, and the established order and course of things in this present world; not to be reconciled in its origin with any known motive and principle of human conduct, and inconsistent in its observance with what must always have been considered one of the first duties of life—a prudent care and foresight in men's making provision for the necessities of nature both in behalf of themselves, and of all others immediately dependent on themselves: and on all these accounts, it must have appeared so much at variance with antecedent prejudice, persuasion, and practice, and so little to be anticipated or expected beforehand, that unless most plainly and distinctly stated, it could scarcely be comprehended; and unless out of a pure, implicit deference to the authority of its author, it could never have been received as binding on the ground of obligation in conviction—or as applicable, on the score of fitness and propriety, as a rule of conduct in practice.

Let us suppose the hearers of our Lord, understanding the precept in its literal sense, to have thought themselves bound to comply with it literally also; and trusting consequently to the hope of an extraordinary providence in their own behalf, to have

parted with all they had, and all they might have had to employ, in making provision for themselves: that is, let us suppose our Lord's own disciples, out of a spirit of obedience to a presumed command of their Master, and a spirit of reliance on a presumed promise of his also, to have reduced themselves by their own act, to a state of worldly poverty—being just as much in need of the supply of their bodily wants as ever, yet utterly destitute of the means of providing for them. Will any one deny that the consequences of such a mistake, if indeed it was a mistake—would be speedily, lamentably, and permanently felt by them? But if it would have been a mistake to put such a construction on our Saviour's language in this instance, it was one to which his language itself was *a priori* liable to give occasion. That a misconstruction, however, of his own meaning, on a question of practice, which the very language employed to convey it, might so easily have suggested, and which if made, was likely to lead to so serious a practical absurdity, affecting his own disciples in particular—should not have been foreseen by him, and if foreseen, not have been carefully obviated; are suppositions, which I cannot prevail upon myself for a moment to entertain.

Perhaps, it will be objected to this argument, that whatever our Saviour might have said either on this or on any other occasion, and in whatsoever manner he might have expressed himself; yet if it was intended to apply to the case of his own disciples in particular, those disciples being under the immediate direction and illumination of the Holy Ghost, could not fail to understand in what sense it was meant for themselves, and consequently how far their own

conduct was to be regulated in conformity to it. But to this objection I answer, that the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is, of a direct illumination from above, so far as it was intended to guide the primitive Christians into *all the truth*, had two objects in view; to remind them of some things, and to communicate others for the first time; as well as of course, to enable them directly or indirectly to understand all. Those things of which it was intended to remind them, were such as they had heard before, from the mouth of our Lord himself. It was promised by him to the apostles, that the Comforter, when he came, should bring to their recollection all that he himself had said[d]. The primary object of all reminding is to bring something back to the memory, which was once laid up there but has since been forgotten; the secondary may be, to enable even what has never been lost from the recollection, but though once heard and subsequently remembered, was never properly understood—not strictly to be called to mind, because known to exist in the memory already—but strictly to become plain and intelligible, which it never was known or felt to be before.

If therefore, our Lord's personal hearers, during his presence with them, had forgotten ought which he might at any time have said to them, it would be the business of the Holy Ghost strictly to remind them of it; if they remembered any thing, as what they had certainly heard from him, but never as yet had understood, it would be his work not simply to remind them of it over again, but to make it thenceforward intelligible to them. Now our Lord's

[d] John xiv. 26.

immediate followers had been instructed by him at various times, both in doctrines and duties, both in articles of faith and rules of practice. Considering the length of his ministry, and considering the many minute discourses which he had with them during its continuance, it is very possible that even had they comprehended all, when they first heard it, as it came from him, they might nevertheless have forgotten a great deal of it, before the time of his ascension into heaven: and considering the nature of his discourses themselves, and the particular points of doctrine to which they were at different times directed, it is to be assumed almost as certain, that even had they ever after retained in memory whatsoever they had heard at first, there must have been much which they could neither have understood originally, nor would ever have understood afterwards, without a supernatural illumination from above.

Now, so far as concerns the possible defect of the power of retention, or of keeping what had been heard ever after in mind—there is no reason why the apostles, or the rest of our Lord's immediate followers, might not have forgotten what they were fully capable of understanding when they heard it at first, as much as what they were not; that is, why they might not just as easily have let slip from their recollection what they had heard their Master say in reference to rules of duty and maxims of conduct, as to points of doctrine and articles of faith. But with respect to the defect of the power of comprehension, or of understanding what was heard at the time, whether afterwards kept in the memory or not—it was very possible that on points of doctrine our Sa-

viour might always be unintelligible to his personal hearers; and there is every reason to believe, that often as he alluded in their presence, to those sublime and mysterious truths which constitute the fundamental articles of the Christian's creed, he was never once understood by them. Nor was it likely that he should be; for he did not allude to them, (by anticipation as it was,) in plain and unqualified terms, but almost always under the disguise of metaphor, figure, and allegory. But with respect to his moral instructions; (such discourses as we must understand to have formed the business of his ordinary teaching as such;) the nature of his instructions themselves renders it almost impossible that they should not have been invariably understood at the time, whether invariably remembered ever after or not. To profess to *teach*, that is, to instruct men in their duty; to tell them what they were bound to do, and how to act on occasions of every day, or what might be of every day occurrence, yet not to be understood; that is, to leave them in doubt about their duty after all; not to make them comprehend what they were required to do, nor to enable them to see how they ought to act under the emergencies in question; would be the one contradictory of the other. I cannot persuade myself therefore, to think that the didactic discourses of our Lord ever stood in need of more light, than they always possessed in themselves, and were always likely to possess, as emanating from the Sun of Righteousness himself, the centre of the system of moral relations, and the focus of light and splendour to the moral world, whence illumination was to be derived to every point of practical obligation; imparting new lustre

and vividness to the clearness of principles acknowledged before, and dispelling whatever was dark, and explaining and fixing whatever was difficult and controvertible. The help of the Holy Spirit might be necessary to enable even the personal hearers of such a teacher to call back to their minds, all that they might have heard him say; but to suppose it necessary to make them *understand* it also, where it was purely of a moral and practical nature, is to suppose what is derogatory to the ability and wisdom of the teacher, to his fitness for such an office, and to his competent discharge of its duties, as well as to the excellence and necessity, the sufficiency and perfection, of what he taught itself.

The power of pleading a divine commission may be requisite to give weight and authority to the teacher personally—and to predispose his hearers to receive and attend to what he teaches them, as *a priori* entitled to implicit deference and respect. But no such plea is necessary to give clearness to his teaching; nor whatever uses it might serve in preparing the way for the reception of what was taught, could it have the least effect, in making it intelligible to the hearers; if it were not so, in itself. Whether the teaching even of a divinely commissioned instructor, is to be understood or not, must depend, like every thing else which one man communicates to another through the medium of words—partly on the nature of the things themselves which are taught, partly, and still more, on the plainness, simplicity, precision, and perspicuity of the language, in which they are expressed. Moreover with respect to principles of moral obligation and rules of practical duty—there is in the mind of every moral agent,

a faculty which we call *the moral sense*, and not much to be distinguished from conscience itself; which, when such principles and rules, though apparently new, are put before it even for the first time, as recommended by an infallible authority, and founded, as they always are, under such circumstances, in the reason of things, instinctively recognises them to be just and true. To suppose, then, one exercise of inspiration for the benefit of the teacher, to enable him to communicate such principles and duties, and another for the benefit of the hearers, to qualify them to understand and apply them; seems not only repugnant to the final end of the first and original revelation, and to what should be its proper sufficiency for its proper purpose, independent of any further help—but unnecessary, if regard be had to the constitution of our moral nature; whose powers of understanding and appropriating the first revelation itself, must render any second communication of light from above, for the same purpose at least, superfluous.

Indeed, we have only to state the proposition, to be satisfied how improper, as well as improbable, is the supposition involved in it. Is it probable, is it conceivable, that the help of the Holy Ghost could be necessary to enable our Lord's hearers to understand his *moral* instructions? that *he* should have been employed for three years in teaching men their duty, yet no man have understood what he had taught them, till the time of the effusion of the Holy Ghost; and even then, only those few on whom that gift was poured out? The supposition is not only injurious to the efficiency of the teaching of our Lord, *per se*, but by the very circumstance

which it considers to have been necessary to give effect to it, yet to have been posterior to and independent of it, confutes itself. How many thousands were there, whom our Lord at different times, in the course of his ministry, taught their several duties, all alike; not one of whom partook in the after illumination of the Holy Ghost! How many millions, since the day when the extraordinary presence of the Holy Ghost was withdrawn from the church, have been left to collect the particulars of their duty from nothing but the plain language of scripture, either in the Gospels, or in the writings of the apostles! and who that ever sought for them there, with a sincere desire of finding them out, and by God's help of putting them into practice, was ever disappointed by the practical sense of the want of more light than the pages of the Gospel themselves supplied, to direct him to the objects of his research?

We may conclude, therefore, that the supernatural assistance of the Holy Ghost might be necessary to enable our Lord's disciples both to remember and to understand what he had said at any time, in reference to doctrines; and perhaps to enable them to remember, but certainly not, generally speaking, to enable them to comprehend, what he had enjoined in reference to duties. And even with respect to such directions as more especially concerned the disciples themselves, and that too in some future capacity; we cannot suppose that the Holy Ghost, in calling these also to their minds again, would be required to assist their comprehension of them any further than to make them see and feel that such injunctions were always intended for themselves in particular; and always for themselves as placed in their present

situation; but not in any former one, different from it. To return, however, from this digression.

When our Lord was discoursing to the multitude just before, on a subject nearly the same with the topic of his present address to his disciples; he laid the restriction on what was called in the Greek, *pleonexia;* that is, the spirit of immoderate and undue desire, or as we may call it in general terms, *the spirit of excess.* Now the prohibition of an excess is so far from implying a disapproval of the mean, that it rather involves an approbation of it. A censure expressly levelled against an extreme, is a tacit recommendation of the mean; and on the same account that our Lord condemned an *excess* of the principle in question, with respect to the possession of the goods of life, and with respect to their use and application; it is just as credible, that had the circumstances of the case required it, he would have reprobated a *defect* of it; as not less opposed to the just medium which ought to regulate both the degree of the value to be set on the goods of life, and the proportion of their accumulation, and the measure of their enjoyment, agreeably to their natural use and purpose.

It is manifest, then, that there could have been nothing criminal in the mere desire of such things, or else our Lord would not have prohibited an *excessive* degree of it, but *any* degree at all. If we find a teacher, like him, therefore, on the same occasion, prohibiting at one time to his hearers *in general,* that is, the people, such a desire of the means of subsistence, and such a provision of the amount of their supply, only as was immoderate and excessive; but directly after prohibiting to his hearers *in*

particular, that is, to his own disciples, any degree of the desire, any extent of the supply, at all; surely we may conclude that there was a special reason why the spirit of the same injunction should be carried so much further in reference to one of these classes of hearers, than to the other. And what special reason is so likely to be the true one, as this? or rather what special reason can adequately account for the distinction drawn between the respective duty of the two classes, in reference to the same obligation, but this; that an extraordinary provision might be expected by the disciples, but none by the people at large; and that each, in reference to the desire or application of property as such, whether as depending on themselves, or as belonging to themselves, must act accordingly? The people, therefore, as having still the care of their own support, must be left to the usual modes of providing for it; and consequently might still desire the ordinary means of subsistence, and still set a value on their possession, provided both their pursuit and their acquisition, as well as their use, of them were confined within the bounds of reason and wisdom, of virtue and religion: but the disciples, as being exempted from all care and concern about their own support, would as naturally be exempted from all desiring and all valuing of wealth and property on its own account too; and might even be strictly cautioned against entertaining any degree of the desire or value thereof, if the very end and design of the extraordinary dispensation to be expected in their own behalf, were likely to be endangered thereby.

The proper signification of the verb which is rendered by *taking thought*, we have already ob-

served to be, the act of deliberating, taking thought or counsel, upon any subject which requires thought and deliberation generally; and consequently in the present instance, where the question at issue is the provision of the supply, and the application of the provision, necessary to the ordinary wants of life; it is such a thought or deliberation, as has the first of those purposes in view, for the sake of the second. The proper meaning, then, of the verb which expresses the taking of thought, with any such view, may be very fitly expressed by *procuring* or *providing;* and there are many reasons, which induce me to think that such is its meaning, and such the mode in which it ought to have been rendered, in the present instance. These reasons are stated below [e].

[e] It is certainly a possible sense of the noun (*μέριμνα*) from which the verb in question is derived, to stand not merely for care in general, but for that kind of care in particular, which is employed in making provision for the future wants of life; and therefore is equivalent to the exercise of foresight (*πρόνοια*) in general. It seems to be so used, Mark iv. 19, in the phrase, *καὶ αἱ μέριμναι τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου,* in the account of the exposition of the parable of the sower; (cf. Matt. xiii. 22. and Luke viii. 14): to express the business of making provision in various ways, for the usual wants, concerns, or necessities of life; and still more, Luke xxi. 34, in that passage of the prophecy on the mount, *ἐν κραιπάλῃ καὶ μέθῃ καὶ μερίμναις βιωτικαῖς*—where, as the two first terms describe kinds and modes of habitual occupation, the third we may presume must do the same: and consequently must be understood of the business of employment in and upon the ordinary concerns of life; the business of providing for secular wants and exigencies. It appears to have a similar meaning in that passage of the first Epistle of Peter, v. 7: *πᾶσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἐπιῤῥίψαντες ἐπ' αὐτὸν, ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν*: "having cast all the weight or burden of your personal care or "anxiety, that is, in your own behalf—the whole business of

Now this distinction is of some importance to the decision of the present question. A command to

" caring and providing for you—upon God ;" for which this natural reason is assigned, that he had a care in their behalf; he was too much interested in their welfare, not to provide for it.

There is so much connexion, between the final end of the act of deliberating with a view to a certain object, especially in matters of practice immediately within our own power, and the act of executing or performing subsequently, agreeably to the result of the deliberation ; that the proper mode of expressing the former may very properly be used for the latter. The verb, *μεριμνᾷν*, therefore, which strictly denotes only the preliminary business of deliberating, even where the subject of deliberation is the best means of supplying the wants and emergencies of the future out of the resources of the present, may very naturally be transferred to express the final result of the deliberation in practice ; or the actual making of that provision for the wants of the future, out of the means of the present, the mode of which it was the object of the deliberation to determine.

There was a passage in this very chapter, in which the word was so used, though in reference to a different subject matter: verse 11. *ὅταν δὲ προσφέρωσιν ὑμᾶς κ', τ. λ. μὴ μεριμνᾶτέ πως ἢ τὶ ἀπολογήσησθε, ἢ τὶ εἴπητε.* Cf. Matt. x. 19. where it was similarly used before. But it is most clearly so used in Mark xiii. 11: *ὅταν δὲ ἀγάγωσιν ὑμᾶς, παραδιδόντες, μὴ προμεριμνᾶτε τί λαλήσητε, μηδὲ μελετᾶτε.* In all these instances, the reference is to the same kind of precaution ; the provision of speeches, apologies, or arguments, in defence of themselves or of their religion, against such an emergency as their being placed before tribunals of justice, and persons in power. Such means of defence, and such topics of argument, as with a view to emergencies like these they might have been enabled to provide from the resources of natural genius, or from the acquired facilities of art and practice, they are forbidden to provide beforehand, for one and the same reason in each instance ; their utter superfluity, and even their inexpediency under the circumstances of the case ; insomuch as the Spirit should suggest at the time, whatsoever was necessary to be said, and should bestow on the spot, a mouth and a wisdom—an eloquence of utterance and a

beware of *providing beforehand* for the necessary wants of life, is a different thing from one to beware

force of argument—which their adversaries should in vain endeavour to gainsay or resist. Under these circumstances, to attempt to do any thing as of and for themselves, with regard to the same effect, would rather impede than promote the success of their endeavours: would rather endanger than facilitate the cooperation of such an extraordinary assistance, at the time of need.

To speak in technical language; we find the subjunctives, λαλήσητε, φάγητε, πίητε, ἐνδύσησθε, used after this verb, μεριμνᾷν, in repeated instances. I apprehend that this is more correct, if the verb itself stands in the sense of *preparing* or *providing* for, something, than if it stands simply for deliberating with a view to such preparation. The latter, I think, would rather have required the futures, λαλήσετε, φαγεῖσθε, πιεῖσθε, ἐνδύσεσθε. Learned readers will be sensible of this distinction in the Greek at once; and an unlearned reader may form some idea of it by being told, that there is the same difference between the two modes of expression, as if one were to say in English, "Do "not provide what you may probably have occasion to speak," &c., or "Do not provide what you may speak, if there is oc- "casion," &c., and "Do not deliberate about what to speak, "when there is occasion;" that is, "Do not deliberate about "what to speak, as if you were certain there would be occasion "for it," and the like.

We find that, verse 29. what was expressed by μὴ μεριμνᾶτε before, is expressed by μὴ ζητεῖτε afterwards. Now to *seek*, with a certain view, may very naturally denote to *procure* or *provide*, with the same view. Therefore so may to take thought, or to deliberate. Indeed, the reason of the thing confirms this construction of the meaning of the term, in the present instance. To suppose that men should deliberate or take thought, what to eat or to drink, or to put on—as if there were any choice about such things—as if they were at liberty to please themselves, whether they would do so or not—seems absurd: but not so, admitting the absolute necessity of such things beforehand, to suppose that they might still deliberate how to prepare and provide for them.

 If

of *taking thought* about them: the former at least might be applicable to circumstances to which the

If we conceive our Saviour to be speaking now to his disciples about making provision for the supply of the future wants of existence, out of the possession of the means of present enjoyment; we render the connexion between the subject of his address to the disciples, and that of his discourse to the people, just before, so much the closer. In the parable with which that discourse was concluded, a rich man was introduced as deliberating not about procuring the means of subsistence for the time to come, but about disposing of the means of enjoyment, already in his power. It would agree very well to the train of thought, likely to be suggested by this consideration of the state of the case, if we supposed our Lord to have turned immediately to his own disciples, and said; "For this reason, I say "unto you; think not of providing for *your* souls what you "may eat; nor for *your* body what you may put on; but trust "entirely for the supply of the wants of both to the care and "providence of your heavenly Father, which shall be exerted in "your behalf."

The parallel part of St. Matthew's sermon on the mount, which agrees with this passage, is summed up in the words; *μὴ οὖν μεριμνήσητε εἰς τὴν αὔριον· ἡ γὰρ αὔριον μεριμνήσει τὰ ἑαυτῆς· ἀρκετὸν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἡ κακία αὐτῆς.* vi. 34. The rendering of which words, I apprehend to be; "Wherefore make ye no provision "against the morrow; for the morrow shall provide for the "*wants* of itself; sufficient for the day is the trouble thereof." It is manifest that the preposition *εἰς*, has here the sense of our *for* or *against;* denoting the doing of something at one time, for the sake of something else at another; which something, under the circumstances of the case, is the providing *on* the day before *against* the wants of the morrow; that is, generally speaking, the taking precautions, out of the means of the present, to guard against the necessities of the future. Such precaution is prohibited; but on what grounds? simply because every succeeding day should provide for itself—every day therefore, when the time arrived, should be found, in some way or other, to have enough for its own wants. To be solicitous therefore about the future; to reserve or lay by ought out of the resources of one

other was not. Let the end of the command be understood in the one instance, of making no provision, in the other of taking no thought, for subsistence required for the future: the former would presuppose the possession of the present means of making such provision, the latter rather the want of them; the former would be binding in the midst of abundance, the latter more properly in penury and want. The former might be levelled against that natural principle of forethought in the human disposition, and that natural regard to its own welfare hereafter as well as at present, which prompts it to make use of existing means and opportunities with a view to future good; and induces it to consider this use of the present for the benefit of the future, the most legitimate and proper: the latter would rather apply to that sense of uneasiness which necessarily arises from the conviction that something is always wanted for the present and future well-being of the individual, when combined with a consciousness that nothing is possessed to provide against it. The one in short might prescribe a duty, under peculiar circumstances, even to the *rich;* the other

day, as likely to be needful for the supplies of the next; would be to do not only what was superfluous in itself, as making provision for what did not require it, but withal to bring upon the day a burden and a difficulty, which by no means belonged unto it—nor could justly be laid to its account. Under such circumstances, there was no need to mix up the prospect of future want with the sense of present dependency. Each day might have its particular wants; but each should also have its particular supply. Sufficient for to-day is the sense of the wants of to-day, and the distress which that sense may produce; and sufficient also for the day is the satisfaction of those wants, and the contentment which that satisfaction ought to give.

could relieve at the utmost only one of the pains of *poverty*.

If each of these commands too were couched in equally general terms; the former, I think, would inculcate a much stronger reliance on an extraordinary Providence, and therefore, would prove more of the peculiar situation of the parties supposed to be addressed by it, than the latter. That men who possessed the means at one time of providing for the wants of another, should be expected not to use them for any such purpose; to think of no such provision; to shut their eyes both to the certainty of wanting hereafter, and to the consciousness that they had means in their power, if they did not intentionally deprive themselves of them, for supplying that want; to act in short as if they had no evil to apprehend from poverty, or no good to derive from wealth; is certainly a stronger intimation of some extraordinary provision to be made for such persons, and a more striking instance of an absolute reliance on it, than any general assurance that there was no reason to be uneasy for the ultimate effect of subsistence, whatever uncertainty there might appear to be about the present means, and any consequent feeling of indifference to the wants of life, any consciousness of independence about the provision for them, conformable to such a feeling—would be.

Having said thus much concerning the statement of the general principle, I shall proceed to consider the particular arguments by which it is enforced: the method which I propose to adopt, being to determine first the principle on which each of these arguments proceeds, and secondly the manner in which it is applied; that is, how much it assumes

as self-evident, and under what suppositions it makes the assumption available to the points at issue.

Now these arguments themselves being sufficiently numerous and distinct to admit of classification, the best division which we can make of them will be found to be into such as go *directly*, and such as go *indirectly*, to the proof of the desired conclusion. In order to elucidate the grounds of this distinction, we may reason as follows.

Where the question at issue is the eviction of a practical principle, consisting in an absolute reliance upon the providence of God, for the supply of those wants which human foresight and ability must otherwise have supplied for themselves; two things are clearly requisite to produce that eviction, as founded upon rational grounds; a confidence in the power of God, *per se*—to be entertained by those, who are required to rely upon his power as adequate to the production of the specified effect—and a confidence in the disposition of God towards themselves—to be entertained by those who are required to be actuated by the conviction of his good-will, to a reliance on the exercise of his power in their own behalf: the former assigning an adequate cause, the latter an adequate motive, for the desired effect, which is the supply of the wants of nature in behalf of such and such persons, independent of any trouble or concern of their own, entirely by the providence of God. With the fullest confidence in the power of God to support any of his creatures independently of their own cooperation, still the actual interposition of that power in their own behalf, would not be to be expected by the persons in question, without a concurrent assurance of the good-will of God

towards themselves in particular: and without the due conviction of what his power was adequate to effect in behalf of any, if he were inclined to exert it for them, no assurance of his good-will towards themselves would give them confidence to reckon on the actual production of so remarkable an effect in their own behalf in particular, as especially the consequence of the power of God once actuated and prompted by its natural moving spring, an equally special degree of good-will towards themselves in particular also. The proof of the power of God then, would convince the disciples, that he was able to maintain them without their own cooperation, if he *would;* and the proof of his good-will to the disciples would convince them that he would maintain them, if he *could;* and the proof of both in conjunction would conspire to produce in them the firmest personal reliance on the promised personal support; satisfying the parties concerned in the admission of the principle, and bound to be actuated and impelled by it themselves accordingly, that as they might securely depend on the care and protection of God, independent of any trouble or concern of their own, so they would be at liberty to act, and might with all justice be required to act, with respect to any thing else, that might otherwise have been wanted for themselves, like persons who had no longer any interest in it, or occasion for it. The arguments therefore which go directly to the proof of the power, or to that of the good-will of God, the former *per se*, the latter in reference to the persons addressed, taken together may justly be considered such as go at once to the proof of the desired conclusion.

Now, where the question at issue concerns the measure of the efficiency of a certain power, with respect to the production of a supposed effect; or the assurance of a certain disposition, which one party may be presumed to cherish in behalf of another, between whom and himself a certain relation of connexion and dependence is previously existing; the most natural, the most apposite, and certainly the most satisfactory method of reasoning, which can be adopted to establish such points, is that which argues from *known* effects of the same power, of a kind similar to that whose probable production or non-production is the point at issue—and from well ascertained demonstrations of the same kind of disposition, as entertained by the same party towards other things, placed in the same situation with reference to himself, as those to whom the measure or degree of his good-will is the question at stake. The arguments which we find to be adduced with this particular view, on each of these points, are accordingly derived from parallel instances, partly of the power and partly of the good-will of God, in other cases; the eviction or assumption of which, on the general ground of the argument from like to like, and on the particular one of that form of this argument, which is called the argument *a fortiori*[f], is trans-

[f] The argument from analogy is divisible into the argument *a pari, a fortiori,* and *a minori.* The argument *a pari* is what we understand by the argument from analogy, properly so called. It reasons from one parallel case to another; from one probability or presumption of a certain degree of strength, whether greater or less, to another *per se* of equal strength or equal weakness; and is the principle of the reasoning in the example, the fable, the parable, as explained in the Introduction. The argument *a fortiori* proceeds on the principle, that if what

ferred to the case of the disciples, as a presumptive proof of what might be expected from the power of God, and what confidence might be placed on the good-will of God, in their own behalf. The truth of this statement will appear from the consideration of the arguments themselves.

First then, after the statement of what we may consider the general proposition, or *problema*, with reference to this question, in verse 22: "For this "reason I say to you, Take no thought for your "soul, what ye may eat; nor for your body, what "ye may put on you:" there follows in St. Luke's account, expressed in the form of an assertion, verse 23: "The soul is more than its subsistence, and the "body than its clothing:" which in St. Matthew's, on the former occasion, was subjoined in the shape of a question: "Is not the soul more than its sub-"sistence, and the body than its clothing?" In both cases there can be no doubt that what follows is intended as one of the proper arguments necessary to shew the fitness and reasonableness of the previous injunction; and therefore so far as the principle of conduct, involved in that precept, required to be founded in conviction, and to be made as satisfactory to the understanding as influential upon the practice, it is one of the reasons designed to produce that conviction in the hearers, and to convey that satisfac-

was antecedently less likely to be true, or to hold good in fact, is true or holds good, much more what was more so: the argument *a minori* on the principle that if what was antecedently more likely to be true, or to hold good in fact, is not true or does not hold good, much less what was less so. The former leads to the establishment of affirmative, the latter of negative, conclusions; but both respecting comparative degrees of probability or improbability merely.

tion to their minds. But the particular subserviency of this first argument to the purposes in question, consists in the proof which it supplies of the ability of God to keep in being those whom he himself has brought into being, without any labour or cooperation of their own—on the self-evident principle that the power which has shewn itself adequate *per se* to the production of a much greater effect of a certain kind, *a fortiori* cannot but be adequate to the production of a less. The analysis of the argument will set this truth in a clear point of view.

For first, it is taken for granted in an argument like this, that to preserve a thing in being is something the same in kind as to bring it into being; that the continuation of life which has once been given, is something analogous to its original communication. It follows, then, that the effect being in both cases something the same, the power necessary to produce it must be something the same also; in other words, that to sustain and preserve in being a thing previously endued with life, is an effect of the same power in general, as that which originally brought it into being.

Again, it is taken for granted, that to sustain or keep in being, is not so great or so difficult a thing as originally to bring into being; and therefore that the continuation of the gift of life is not so extraordinary and wonderful a dispensation, as the gift of life at first. It follows, then, that the power which was adequate to the one, must *a fortiori* be competent to the other.

To apply these assumptions to the question at issue, the gratuitous supply of the necessaries of life—as comprehended in the two most essential

articles food and clothing, the former standing for the wants of the soul, the latter for those of the body—the use of the necessaries of life is the means appointed for the continuance and support of life; and when means are regarded in their proper relative character, as instrumental to such and such an end, the question of the supply or provision of the means is tantamount to that of the truth or certainty of the effect, which they are designed to produce.

The question, therefore, of the supply of the means of subsistence, is the same with that of the supply of the means of the continuance and prolongation of existence itself. As, then, the continuance of life is something subordinate to the first gift of life, so is the constant supply of the means of life, something subordinate to the continuance of life—and therefore to the first gift of life; and as the continuance of life was a much less effect than the first gift of life, so is the supply of the wants of life a much less effect than the first gift of life also. The power then, which was adequate to the first gift of life, *a fortiori* is adequate to the constant supply of the means of life.

But the argument does not stop here. It is clearly supposed that the power which did originally bestow the gift of life, and therefore was adequate to the production of an effect like that, was the power of God, on the one hand; and that the parties on whom the gift was bestowed, consisting in the union of a body and a soul, were the disciples of our Lord, on the other: and it is also supposed, as self-evident, that the power which bestowed such a gift of life, even on the disciples, that is, wrought such an effect for their sake—did originally bestow it without any

cooperation of the possessors themselves, did originally work independent of them. Much more, then, must the same power, were it so inclined in their behalf, be competent to bestow whatever was necessary, even in their case, to the continuance and possession of its own gift; yet as independently of their own cooperation, as freely and gratuitously, as before. And such being the natural result of the argument, when traced from its first principles to its ultimate consequences, it follows that this must have been the conclusion to which it was always designed to conduct; and therefore that the question at issue, from the first, was not whether the power of God was adequate to contribute to the supply of the wants of life, by cooperating merely with the exertions of the possessors of the gift of life, (in this instance the disciples of our Lord in particular,) to maintain and perpetuate the gift for themselves; but whether it was able to keep them in being, to maintain and perpetuate the enjoyment of its own gift in their case, by freely providing for all their wants without any cooperation of their own at all. And indeed it must be confessed that the drift of an argument, which proceeds on the assumption that the power which could freely bestow the gift of life originally, on any of his creatures, must *a fortiori* be competent, if he pleases, freely to keep them in being—goes to the decision of this question at once.

The next argument agrees with the preceding, in being taken from a case in point, and leading, as before, to a conclusion *a fortiori;* but it differs from it, in being derived from the instances not so much of the power of God, as of his disposition towards his creatures; and therefore in being intended to shew

what might be expected in behalf of the disciples of Christ, not from his power *per se*, but from his good-will towards them in particular. It is contained in verse 24: "Consider the ravens, that they "sow not, neither do they reap: for whom there is "not storeroom, nor barn: yet God feedeth them. "How much are ye rather better than the fowls!" To which we may add verses 27, 28, also, as merely a further illustration of the same kind of truth, with a view to produce the same specific conviction, as by the instance adduced in verse 24: "Consider the lilies "how they grow: they toil not, nor do they spin; "and I say unto you, Not even Solomon in all his "glory clad himself as one of these. But if God "arrayeth in such wise the grass which to-day is "in the field, and to-morrow is cast into an oven; "how much rather you, O ye of little trust!"

The drift of this argument accordingly, is from the known effects of the good-will of God, in two very familiar instances, towards an inferior order of his creatures, the birds of the air and the flowers of the field respectively, to infer what might with much more reason be expected from the same good-will towards an order of his creatures and dependents, so much more elevated in the scale of being, and so much dearer and more valuable in the eyes of a common Creator, the disciples of his Son Jesus Christ—in the production of like effects for them too.

The first principle then of such an argument is this very just and natural assumption, that the benevolence of God is proportionably extended to all his creatures; and therefore that while it is divided out in due measure and extent towards each, it is, and it must be, greater in the degree and intensity of

affection towards some than towards others; towards the highest than towards the lowest.

It takes it for granted, in the next place, that the grass of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the disciples of the Son of God themselves, all so far agreed as to be each of them the creatures of God in common, and each of them objects of more or less of the good-will of the same Creator in common; but that the disciples of his Son were an order or class of his creatures much superior in themselves, much more nearly related to their Creator, and therefore entitled to a much higher degree of his common regard for his own creatures, than either of the other two.

Thirdly, it takes it for granted, that the provision of food for the birds of the air, and so far the support of the animal creation in general—and the clothing of the grass of the field, that is, the richness, variety, and profusion of colours which adorn and beautify the exterior face of nature, more especially in the vegetable kingdom—apparently for no purpose but to please the eye, and to decorate even the meanest and most insignificant of the creatures of God in a manner worthy of the greatness and perfection of their Creator—are effects of the power, actuated by the good-will of God, in favour of both these orders of beings in common, but towards each in particular, according to the exigencies of a certain proper nature, and the capabilities of certain proper faculties. And it is left to be thence inferred that the same exertion of divine power, actuated by the same good-will, was much more to be expected in behalf of the disciples, for the supply of their proper necessities, and in proportion to their proper capacities also, as so much dearer to the love of God,

and so much the more naturally an object of his care and concern.

Nor is this all. It is clearly assumed, throughout the whole of the comparison between these different classes of the divine creatures, and these different degrees of the exercise of the divine power, subordinate to the divine good-will, in behalf of each; that what is done for the birds or for the flowers, is spontaneously, freely, and gratuitously done. The former are fed; but without granary to receive, or storehouse to furnish the needful supplies for themselves: the latter are decorated; but without distaff to spin, or loom to weave for themselves: each therefore, by nothing but the power and good-will of their Maker, independent of all foresight, labour, and cooperation of their own in their behalf. It must, consequently, be just as clearly implied, that the supply of the necessities of life which the disciples of Christ were taught, on the authority of such a contrast as this, to expect from the same power and good-will in their behalf, was to be as gratuitous, and as independent of themselves, as that with which it was compared. If it was not to be so, there would no longer be any analogy between the things compared; the parallel between the case of the disciples, and that of these other two orders of the divine creatures, would be at an end: the free and gratuitous support of the latter by the providence of God, would prove or imply nothing of what was to be expected from it, to the same effect, in behalf of the former [g].

[g] The exquisite pathos, the original character, the moral beauty, and the peculiar appositeness of the arguments above employed—referred to the circumstances of time and place under

We have now done with the consideration of such arguments, as by going directly to the proof of the

which the discourse was delivered—are qualities which every reader of taste will concur in ascribing to them; but the perception of which is much more striking and instantaneous, from the simple perusal of them in the original, than from that formal and methodical statement of them, to which, for the sake of explaining the principles on which they proceed, we have been obliged to reduce them.

As to the vein of pathos and simplicity which pervades the whole passage, it requires to be felt in order to be appreciated, rather than analyzed or defined. But with regard to the novelty and originality of such sentiments, arguments like these, however just and forcible, were never before urged for any such purpose. It would be in vain to search for a parallel to them, in the most admired productions of heathen morality; and yet they possess in an eminent degree, what is in fact a characteristic of the finest thoughts in general, the property of appearing, at first sight, the most simple, perspicuous, natural and obvious imaginable.

Phrases something similar to those of our Lord may certainly be found in the language of heathen moralists; but no such reasoning as his. For instance, in Epictetus: Νῦν δὲ, *τί γίνεται; νεκρὸς μὲν ὁ παιδευτὴς, νεκροὶ δ' ὑμεῖς· ὅταν χορτασθῆτε σήμερον, κάθησθε κλαίοντες, περὶ τῆς αὔριον, πόθεν φάγητε*: Manuale, i. 9. p. 55. Again, Ἐπεὶ *ὅρα οἷον ἦν, ἡμᾶς φροντίζειν μὴ περὶ αὑτῶν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν προβάτων, καὶ τῶν ὄνων, πῶς ἐνδύσηται, καὶ πῶς ὑποδήσηται, πῶς φάγῃ, πῶς πίῃ*. Ibid. 16. 87.

Their moral beauty, a quality distinct from that of their argumentative fitness, and borrowed more properly from the essential and characteristic purity of the mind which conceived them, appears to me to consist in their suitableness, *a priori*, to the soundest and most correct notions, which we can form, both of the justice and of the goodness of God. They all describe the Deity in the relation of the common Creator of the universe; and the predominant features in his character, on which they insist, are naturally borrowed from that relation—the exercise of his power subordinate to his goodness, in the capacity of a common Creator, for the benefit more or less of all his creatures—

power of God *per se*, or to that of his good-will towards the disciples of Christ in particular, we as-

but in behalf of each in a different manner, and to a different degree. Both the power and the goodness of the Creator, then, are supposed to be exerted in behalf of his creatures, not arbitrarily nor capriciously, but according to the reason of things; nor is he more kind and benevolent, than impartial and discriminating, in the dispensations of his love and his bounty. An inferior order of his creatures partakes of his regard, and shares in the benefits of his providence, as well, but not as much, as an higher; an higher is more esteemed and more cherished, but not to the neglect of a lower: so that while as the common father of all nature, he feels the affection of a parent, and exerts the care and solicitude of a parent for all, even the meanest of his productions—yet he discriminates between the respective birthrights of his children, and their respective place and station; what they are in themselves, and what is their comparative proximity to himself; and while he awards their due to all, he respects the prerogatives of some above those of the rest.

The appositeness of the arguments and illustrations, now employed, to the circumstances of time and place, will appear upon considering that Jesus, having recently quitted the house of the Pharisee, where he had gone to break bread, was now in the open air; and that the time, being a little before the fourth passover, was certainly the time of spring, and very probably the Jewish month Adar; so named from the splendour and magnificence with which the surface of nature, through the profusion of flowers which start into being in spring, and the exuberance of vegetative luxuriance, at that season is covered. It is very likely then that the objects of nature to which he appeals, were present before his eyes at the time, and that he drew from the life when he drew his similitudes from them. The birds of the air, at all times full of animation and activity, might even then be in motion around him; and partaking of that very repast which he affirmed the bounty of divine providence every day to have prepared for them. In the month Adar, the country in Judæa is covered with a beautiful verdure; the trees are in full leaf; and a multitude of flowers decorate the bosom of the ground. Among these might be the lily of the field; the flower

sumed to lead directly to the proof of the point at issue; the question of an extraordinary provision in their behalf, to be expected from the power and goodness of God, without any cooperation of their own. We have still to consider the indirect; or such as go to the proof of the desired conclusion in some other way than by appealing directly either to the power of God absolutely, or to his good-will in behalf of the disciples relatively.

The first of these is an argument *ad absurdum*, contained in verse 25: "And which of you, taking " of thought, is able to add one cubit to his stature?" For the explanation of this reasoning, it is necessary to observe that the word, which is rendered *stature*,

particularly alluded to, in comparison of the natural beauty and unartificial embellishments of the dress of which, even Solomon, the richest and most magnificent of kings, who ever reigned in the East, might be said to be poorly and meanly clad.

As the dress of royalty in the East, has always been purple, the probability is that a purple flower is meant by this object of comparison with it. The word κρίνον is used in Greek to denote a purple lily. Est et rubens lilium, says Pliny the elder, quod Græci crinon vocant: H. N. xxi. 11. And again, Sunt et purpurea lilia, &c. Ibid. 12. Theophrastus also observes, Καὶ ἔτι δὴ μᾶλλον ἡ τῶν κρίνων, εἴπερ δὴ καθάπερ φασὶν ἔνια καὶ πορφυρᾶ ᾖ. Hist. Plant. vi. 6. Cf. Dioscorides, iii. 110.

Not but that κρίνον also denotes the white lily.

Λευκὸν τὸ κρίνον ἐστί· μαραίνεται ἀνίκα πίπτει.

Theocritus, Idyll. xxiii. 30.

At Aleppo, according to Dr. Russell, the fields every where throw out the autumnal lily daffodil, immediately after the autumnal rains. The same lily is found in Palestine. But this is a white flower, the hemerocallis of antiquity. See Harmer, iv. 142. Obs. cxliii.

Some commentators understand by the lily in question, a splendid purple flower, resembling the crown imperial; so common in Judæa, that whole fields are covered by it.

(ἡλικία,) properly denotes a period of time; viz. the interval within which the body of man attains to the fulness of its growth and size; whence, by a very common metonymy, as the designation of the period during which a certain effect takes place, it is put for the effect itself; so that, being applied to the body, it is used to denote the full-grown stature of a man.

Now, in such an argument as this, it is obviously taken for granted, that whether the body itself be tall or short of stature, is one of the least indispensable of all requisites to the well-being of the body itself; and therefore that even to desire to effect, much more to effect, a change in its existing state of that description, may justly be said to desire to do, or to do that which, so far as the welfare of the body was concerned, would be the least important thing of all.

Again, such being the case, it may well be presumed that to deliberate, or to think of taking measures, for a purpose like that of the addition of a cubit to the full-grown stature of a man, is a proverbial expression to describe the going about to compass what is either impossible in itself, or for the end which is contemplated by it, is superfluous and unnecessary.

Lastly, all this being urged as a serious argument against deliberating about providing, or taking measures to provide, for the necessary wants of the body —dissuading the disciples from doing this—it follows, that whatever might be the necessity or propriety of such deliberations on the part of others, yet as affecting the disciples in particular, even these would be just as absurd, just as superfluous in their

case, as the other kind of deliberation would be in the case of any; just as absurd, if equally impracticable, just as superfluous, if equally unnecessary. On either supposition, it will follow that the case of the disciples must have been something singular; that there was some reason in their instance to render the precautions in question either unavailing or unnecessary, which there was not to make them so in the case of other people. If we suppose the disciples in particular to be placed under the extraordinary providence of God, this supposition satisfies the conditions of their case; but independent of or distinct from it, it is not easy to say, what will do so.

The next argument occurs in verse 29, and part of verse 30: "And do not ye seek what ye may eat "or what ye may drink: and be not of wavering "mind [h]. For all these things do the nations of the "world seek after:" and it turns upon the fact of the example of the rest of the world, in a certain instance of conduct, as a reason why the disciples of our Lord in particular, should not have occasion, or should even be bound and be expected not to imitate their example, in adopting the same behaviour.

For first, it is manifest that the words which describe the kind of persons alluded to, "the nations "of the world," (τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου,) cannot be intended to denote less than the complex of all mankind, in contradistinction to the family of faith; that is, they are purposely designed to oppose all those who were

[h] The word in the original is μετεωρίζεσθε. The classical reader may compare Horace, Epp. lib. i. xviii. 109, 110.

Sit bona librorum, et provisæ frugis in annum
Copia; neu fluitem dubiæ spe pendulus horæ.

not the disciples of Christ, however numerous, to all those who were, however few.

Secondly, the verb, "to seek," which in one of these propositions is the version of ζητεῖν, and in the other of ἐπιζητεῖν, is used indifferently both of those who were disciples, and of those who were not; and as applied to either has no more than its common and simple acceptation of *pursuit* or *desire* in general: without further implying, that the desire is inordinate in its degree, the pursuit is improperly directed in its object. Ζητεῖν or *to seek*, can have no such further qualification of its meaning as this: and while ζητεῖν cannot, neither can ἐπιζητεῖν; for to suppose ζητεῖν to denote one thing, as referred to the disciples, and ἐπιζητεῖν another, as referred to the world at large, would be absurd.

Thirdly, as to what is meant by "all these things," (ταῦτα πάντα,) to express the object of the pursuit or desire in question; they are manifestly such things as are included in the notion of "what is to be eaten "and what is to be drunken, and what is to be put "on"—mentioned before; that is, they must be understood of the necessaries of life—the means of subsistence, in general.

Fourthly, it is affirmed as a plain and undeniable truth, that the desire or pursuit of the necessaries of life, the business of making provision for the unavoidable and indispensable wants of nature, was something in which all the world were agreed, and might justly be said to be so, without exception, and without regard to any differences between them, however characteristic and peculiar, in other respects. It was not less true in short, of the Jew, as one of the nations of the world, than of the Gen-

tile, as constituting the rest. Yet lastly, this very circumstance of a common behaviour in which all mankind besides agreed, is urged as a special reason why the disciples of Christ in particular ought to do no such thing; but should pursue a line of conduct quite otherwise, and different from it.

One side or other, then, of the following dilemma must hold good. If the disciples of Christ in particular were commanded not to imitate the conduct of the rest of mankind, in providing for their own subsistence as well as they could; they were commanded to renounce all the ordinary care and concern about themselves, which every body else was known and seen to feel and exercise—and therefore to trust altogether, for their own support, unto something else: if they were not commanded to do all this, they were not required to pursue a line of conduct different from the ordinary behaviour of the rest of the world. The last of these suppositions would be repugnant to the fact of the command itself—which precedes in the former part of the same sentence, and is couched in too plain terms to be mistaken. The former, therefore, is the truth; and that being admitted, it follows that they who were commanded to cease to care for themselves, and to trust in the care of their God in their own stead, were supposed to be placed under an extraordinary providence.

The next indirect argument is contained in the latter part of verse 30, and is in fact a continuation of that which we have just been considering: (ὑμῶν δὲ ὁ πατὴρ οἶδεν ὅτι χρήζετε τούτων:) *literally*, "But of "you the Father knoweth that ye have need of "these things." To explain this argument, regard must be had to the context; and therefore we must

state it in conjunction with what goes before. "And "do not ye seek what ye may eat or what ye may "drink: and be not of wavering mind. For all "these things do the nations of the world seek "after; but (*or* whereas) your Father knoweth that "ye have need of these things:" whence we may perceive, that this concluding assertion is urged as a reason for both the preceding clauses; both why the disciples needed not to be uneasy or distrustful, about their own support, and why they needed not to do as the rest of the world did, in supplying or seeking to supply, their wants for themselves.

First, then, with respect to the command in general to renounce all care or concern themselves, about their own support: it is still admitted in such a concluding declaration as this, that though in obedience to the command itself, the persons addressed by it were actually to forego all concern and solicitude of their own, for their proper support, they would nevertheless have just the same occasion for the supply of the necessary wants of life, as ever; and therefore that the ground of the command was no ignorance on the part of him who gave it, of the necessity of such a supply in behalf of all mankind, under ordinary circumstances, or to the disciples of Christ, even under extraordinary circumstances.

Secondly, the circumstance that God knew they should still have need of such and such things, even while they were forbidden to care about them for themselves, or to take measures for providing them in their own behalf—being urged as the very reason why such care was to be abandoned, and why such provision was to be considered superfluous; it

is obvious that the final end of forbidding this taking of thought about the necessities of life, upon such a ground as this, by the persons addressed, was not to supersede the necessity of the means of subsistence even in their behalf, but to spare them the uneasiness of having to *care* for them, to excuse them from the *trouble* of having to provide them. If it is supposed, that even while commanded not to think about their own support, or to do any thing with a view to provide for it, they should still have need of support, all the time—no other conclusion can follow with respect to the situation of such persons, than this; not that they were, nor that they should be rendered independent of the usual means of supporting life in general, but of the usual mode of procuring those means in particular.

Again, taking this reason in conjunction with the other, "for all these things do the nations of "the world seek after, whereas your Father know-"eth that ye have need of these things;" we might argue, that a special command addressed to the disciples of Christ, not to imitate the example of the rest of the world in a certain respect, as they must otherwise have done—implies both a special reason to render it proper to address such a command to the disciples in particular, and a special circumstance of distinction in their situation, to make such a reason applicable to them, and not to the rest of the world. If this circumstance of distinction between the disciples and the rest of the world, was to consist in this; that they were to differ from all mankind, in what all mankind otherwise were agreed in, that timely provision for the necessary wants of life—that prudent regard to the future,

which prompts men to turn present means and opportunities to their most profitable and most natural purposes hereafter—it follows, that with respect to the wants of life, present or to come, the disciples would be placed in circumstances peculiarly their own, and absolutely without a parallel in the situation of the rest of the world: and that being the case, it would be an abundant reason for inculcating upon them in particular the special duty of not doing, with a view to the provision of the ordinary wants of life, what the rest of the world might well be expected to do. It would not be *necessary* for them, as it might be for the rest of the world, still to do so.

But why should it not be necessary? Either, we may reply, because they in particular should not have occasion for the same supply of the necessities of life, as the rest of mankind, or not the same occasion to concern themselves about providing for it, as they. Now each of these reasons could not be true of the situation of the same persons at the same time; and though either of them would suppose a peculiar circumstance of distinction in the case of those parties to whom it might apply, and either would account for the fact of a special command's being addressed to them to act differently from the rest of mankind; yet with regard to the disciples of Christ and to their situation, the latter is the real state of the case: because even while they are forbidden to concern themselves about the provision of the necessaries of life, it is admitted, as we have seen, that they would have the same occasion for them nevertheless, as if they had to provide them for themselves. The special reason of the com-

mand, then, as addressed to them, not to imitate the example of the rest of the world in providing for their own subsistence, was not that they could dispense with the effect designed by that provision, but with the trouble and solicitude of making it: the providence of God would spare them that trouble, by taking it upon itself, and without requiring them to use the same means, would put *them* in possession of the same end, which all the pains and labour and care that the rest of the world could bestow upon it, in their own behalf, were no more than adequate to effect for them.

The knowledge of God extends, no doubt, to the perception of the wants of all his creatures, whether rational or irrational. But it does not follow that because the existence of such wants is known to him, therefore their supply may be expected from him; at least not in the case of his rational creatures, who, having been endued by him with powers of understanding and reflection, and being capable of comprehending beforehand their own necessities, or what they require both for their being and their well-being; and having been provided also with faculties of forecast, contrivance, and execution; are not less capable of satisfying their own wants, than of discovering them; or at least may safely be left to themselves, to take the necessary measures of precaution in their own behalf, with nothing but the blessing of God on the result, and his silent cooperation with the endeavours of his creatures, as the true efficient cause of their success, even in the use of those means which their own wisdom or prudence may suggest.

An assurance, then, however true, that certain

things essential to the welfare of the disciples of Jesus Christ, which might, under ordinary circumstances, be provided for themselves, were known unto God to be necessary to them, would not be urged as a presumptive, and much less as a positive, reason, why those things might be expected from him; were there not special reasons to make it incumbent that what God was conscious the disciples of his Son would of course want, must of course be supplied by him. This special consideration appears at once, if the things in question are supposed to be necessary indeed to their personal existence, but prohibited to their personal labour and pursuit. In that case the constant interposition of an extraordinary dispensation of divine power would be requisite in their behalf, either to render them competent to exist without the ordinary means of existence, or to supply them with those means, without their own trouble and cooperation. Both these methods would be equally successful for the end in view, and equally extraordinary in themselves; but if the latter were possible, the former would be superfluous—and would be an exertion of divine power not only extraordinary but unnecessary; and therefore, not to be expected.

There still remains one argument, belonging to the number of the indirect, which though as powerful as any of the rest, and tending as naturally to the eviction of the same principle, is somewhat different from them, both as inculcating the principle of conviction on the ground of the deference due to the promise and assurance of a certain infallible authority, and as involving a rule of conduct also. It may be considered, therefore, to stand in a common

relation to each member of this section of the discourse; summing up and concluding the argumentative, and introducing the preceptive or practical.

The argument in question is contained in the 31st verse; "Only seek ye the kingdom of God, "and all these things shall be added unto you." The same argument was expressed by St. Matthew, vi. 33, on the former occasion, as follows; "But "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his right-"eousness, and all these things shall be added unto "you." Of both these statements, it is obvious, that they contain a promise of something to be expected, on condition of something to be done; the promise, absolute and unreserved, the condition, clearly stipulated and prescribed. If the latter therefore, could only be fulfilled, then, if any confidence might be reposed in the assurance of its author, the former might certainly be expected.

The parties, on whom the performance of the condition is supposed to be binding, as necessary to the fulfilment of the promise, on the one hand, are the disciples of Jesus Christ; and he, on whom the fulfilment of the promise, as attached to the performance of the condition, is supposed to be equally binding on the other, is either God or Jesus Christ. The object, then, of proposing the condition is that something might be done by the disciples for themselves, in the first place; and that of subjoining the promise, is that something might be expected from God or from Jesus Christ, in the next; the former, consequently, implying to a certain extent the necessity even of their own exertions, the latter nothing but a simple reliance on the veracity, and confidence in the power, of God or of Christ.

It is not less evident that the subject-matter of the condition is the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God; and that of the promise, is, "all "these things," explained as above, viz. the necessaries of life; the supply of the most indispensable of the wants of existence. The connexion between the subject of the condition and that of the promise is so expressed, that if the disciples would seek the one first, the other should be added unto them; that is, if the disciples would *first* endeavour to obtain *for* themselves the subject of the proposed condition, they should obtain *over* and *above* the subject of the annexed promise; in other words, would they only direct their own wishes and their own endeavours to the attainment of the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God, they should have no need to concern themselves further about the ordinary wants of life; they might depend on *their* being otherwise provided for them.

I think we may justly infer from this representation, that the things stipulated for in the condition with a view to the promise, are proposed not only as a proper object of personal pursuit, but as a sole and exclusive object of such pursuit; an object of pursuit to be divided by the proper persons with nothing else: and that the things, which are pledged in the promise as a consequence of the condition, are proposed to be expected by the same persons as a *gratuity;* as an act or instance of bounty from some other quarter, unsought for and unsolicited by themselves, the gainers by which, whose hopes and affections were all fixed upon something else, and all absorbed upon something else, would suddenly find themselves in possession of another good, which

they were not desiring, and of which they were not even thinking, at the time. That the *possession* of this good may be perfectly compatible with the *pursuit* of the other; that it may be even indispensable to it; is no objection. The important circumstance of distinction continues unaffected by this fact; viz. that while the pursuit of the other—the prior, the sole, and the exclusive pursuit of the other—is that which God commands and requires of the persons in question, under the circumstances of the case—the possession of the one is something which he freely and gratuitously bestows upon them—whether from a sense of its necessity to them even for the exclusive pursuit of the other, or not—yet still as a mark of his approbation of the exclusiveness of the pursuit itself, and as a means of rewarding those, who though they cannot dispense with the enjoyment of one good for the sake of themselves, nevertheless devote themselves absolutely and totally to the attainment of another for the sake of God.

The different senses of the phrase *kingdom of God* were explained in the tenth chapter of the General Introduction to the present work. Among these significations, that which expresses the meaning of the phrase both in this text of St. Luke, and in the corresponding passage of St. Matthew, I apprehend to be the fourth there enumerated; viz. the ultimate state of felicity, which is proposed to the faith and well-doing of believers here, as their proper and personal reward hereafter.

It follows, then, that the kingdom of God proposed here, as the first and exclusive object of desire and research, to all those who aspire to be admitted into it, is not so properly the kingdom of which

God is himself the possessor, as that of which he is himself the dispenser; the kingdom, whose enjoyment does not constitute the glory and happiness of God, but the reward and exaltation of his servants. It is no kingdom, then, which can be enjoyed in this life; though it may be exclusively desired, and systematically pursued, as the main object of hope and desire in this life. It is something, then, which though proposed to the individual affections of every Christian, and competent to constitute the reward of his individual probation, must still be desired as future, and still be contemplated only as a reward to come, in the present life; and can neither be attained to nor enjoyed, until the next.

The command then to seek this kingdom first, is a command which proposes an end to be pursued indeed in this life, but not to be attained before the next. Now every end requiring means, and the final attainment of an end presupposing the use of the requisite means, it might well be expected that along with a practical direction to specify the object of some pursuit, to lay down the business of some attainment, the means subservient to the end, and required to be employed in the attainment of it, would also be pointed out. This presumption is found to be the case, if not as St. Luke expresses the command, yet as St. Matthew does; provided that, as by the words "kingdom of God," common to them both, we understand the end proposed to pursuit; so by those of "the righteousness of God," subjoined to the former in St. Matthew, we understand the instrumental means necessary to its attainment.

The righteousness of God is a phrase which no more requires to be understood of the personal right-

eousness of God, than that of the kingdom of God does of his personal kingdom: but as the latter is properly the reward which he dispenses to such as deserve it, so the former may fitly denote the kind or degree of the desert, which he requires from them in order to dispense it to them. The righteousness of God, then, is the personal qualification which God has made requisite, in order to personal admission into the kingdom of God. Nor indeed, from the nature of the case, where the kingdom of God is proposed as the end, can any thing but the righteousness of God be regarded as the means. Both the end and the means, in the method prescribed for the attainment of his own gifts, are of the appointment of God; and if he promises a reward to well-doing, he prescribes the righteousness which constitutes that well-doing, and gives a claim to its reward also: and if the former can properly be called his kingdom or the possession of his kingdom, the latter may be called, on the same principle, his righteousness or the possession of his righteousness.

The words of Christ, then, as stated in this verse, may unquestionably be said to convey an absolute assurance of one thing to be expected from God, on condition of another to be expected from the disciples; and consequently, were the condition such as could be supplied by the disciples, and the promise such as could be fulfilled by God, then, upon the actual performance of the stipulation on their part, they would acquire a right to expect the punctual discharge of the promise on the part of God—or else, the word and assurance of Jesus Christ would have been pledged to them in vain. But the condition was plainly within the power of the disciples;

viz. the fixed resolution of leading an holy and virtuous life, agreeably to the will and commandments of God, in the present world, with a single view to the rewards and exaltations of the next; and the promise was much more within the power of Almighty God; viz. the free and gratuitous supply of whatsoever would still be necessary to the support of existence, in the present life, even in behalf of those, whose thoughts and affections, whose labours and employments, here, were exclusively directed to and occupied upon, the objects of religious desire or concern hereafter. The veracity of Christ, then, stood pledged, that if the disciples themselves would perform one of these things, God would perform the other; and if on the strength of that pledge they voluntarily set themselves about the fulfilment of their own part, regard to that veracity could not allow them to be diffident about the fulfilment of the stipulated part of God.

The present passage, therefore, besides conspiring with all that precedes, to inculcate a firm reliance on an extraordinary Providence in behalf of the persons addressed, serves the further purpose also, of declaring finally and authoritatively, on what condition and solely on what, the assurance of such a reliance which every preceding observation had contributed to raise and confirm, might confidently be entertained, and should actually be verified in the event. It serves also as an appropriate means of transition from the part which precedes, to the matter about to follow; which taking for granted the truth of the general principle of action, proceeds to declare what ought to be done in consequence of it: for it not only concludes the proof of that truth, but in-

culcates a practical admonition along with it; and while it warrants a certain belief, on grounds satisfactory to the understanding—a combined reliance on the word of Christ and on the power of God—it stipulates for a certain performance, without which the reliance itself would neither be reasonable in principle, nor available in application.

Besides which, the specific direction of the practical matter which follows, however naturally that may flow from the eviction of the previous principle, is still such as to regard but one particular instance of that general condition, compliance with which was made the only authorized ground of dependence on the efficacy of the principle itself; that general condition, in one word, being the perfection required from Christians. The object of the precepts, which ensue, is, after all, merely such an use and disposal of money in behalf of others, as may justly be considered incumbent on those who have reason to rely on the providence of God in behalf of themselves; which use and disposal, though under the circumstances of the case a part, and a main part, of the duty incumbent on Christians, are still only a *part;* and far from being in themselves sufficient for their perfection.

With regard to the practical directions in question, they may be considered as peculiar to what was said upon this occasion; though Matt. vi. 19—21, agrees substantially with Luke xii. 33, 34. To confine ourselves therefore to this last account; we may observe first, that general statements, delivered in the same absolute, peremptory, and unconditional manner, occur in this section of the paragraph as well as in the former; on which we might reason

as before, that were they not designed to be received, understood, and applied, in the same comprehensive sense, in which they were apparently delivered, there was even more necessity to have guarded them by limitations, restrictions, and qualifications, than before. Again, the substance of this part is not so exclusively practical, but that it contains a mixture of argument with precept, to justify the command in particular cases: as neither was the former part so purely argumentative, but that it contained somewhat of preceptive matter.

As the practical inferences too, contained in this part, are immediately subjoined to the eviction of the principle established by the former, so do they immediately flow from its truth, and presuppose its admission; and like the reasonings by which that conviction was previously effected, the inferences, deducible from it in practice, are twofold likewise; the direct and the indirect consequences of its truth. The connexion of these consequences with the common principle and with each other, may be thus explained.

When such a principle of belief as this, that a firm and implicit reliance, for the supply of the necessary wants of life, may be placed on the providence of God, has once been established; it follows that poverty must cease to be dreaded as a personal evil, and wealth to be desired as a personal good. There can be nothing to apprehend from the fear of want, on the one hand—nothing to require providing for, out of the means of abundance, on the other: poverty therefore will be disarmed of its personal terrors, and riches will be deprived of their personal charms and attractions. The true reason why in-

digence is an evil, and therefore the true principle on which poverty is to be feared, is the fact that the necessity of the means of subsistence must even be the greatest, where the power of providing for them is the least; and the main reason why affluence is good, the chief principle on which the possession of wealth is to be valued as desirable, is the consciousness which it affords of certain security against certain want; the means which it necessarily bestows, of a constant supply for a constant need. Nor does it make any difference to the consciousness of this security, and to the reality of this independence, whether the neverfailing supply of a never ending want, be derived from the resources of the party who stands in need of it, or from any other source. Even those who are stipendiaries on the bounty of another, (as children in the family of their parents, or pensioners at the table of a daily almoner,) enjoying the benefit of a constant provision for their actual wants, with none of the labour and none of the cost of making it—though really possessed of nothing which they can call their own, are yet as secure of every thing which they positively want, or can reasonably desire, as if they were masters of unbounded and inexhaustible wealth.

It does not follow, however, that those, who being possessed of the means of providing for themselves, should not have occasion, and should not be required to employ them in their own behalf; might not be expected, and might not have occasion, to employ them in behalf of others. On the contrary, this circumstance of their own situation, by which they are rendered independent of their own support,

making them the more able to employ the means of their own support availably to that of others, places them under a stronger obligation to do so. The natural use and application of such means, under these circumstances, are not superseded and set aside absolutely and with respect to all, but only relatively and with respect to their actual possessors. These means are superfluous indeed to them, for any such purpose as their own subsistence; but they may still be necessary to others, and may still be applied to their benefit. It cannot be supposed that the final end of even a special dispensation of Providence in behalf of some, should be to render the possession of wealth—so principal a means of doing good—unproductive of benefit and incapable of any utility, in respect of the rest. If the protection of God may be relied upon in behalf of some, authorizing them to expect the supply of their personal necessities directly from himself; that which before might have been provided, or might have been capable of being directed to any purpose, in their own behalf, is left free to be employed in some different way; and can be appropriated to nothing so agreeably to its own nature and to the use that would be made of it, under other circumstances, in behalf of the possessors themselves, as in being devoted to the service of others.

The first consequence, then, which might be expected to flow from the previous eviction of the principle in question, would naturally be one, intended for the encouragement of the persons themselves, whose conduct this principle was designed to influence; that whether they possessed little, or whether they possessed much, they should all be

alike independent of themselves, and of their own means; whether they had nothing beforehand that they could call their own, or however much they might have, though by their own act they freely deprived themselves of all—they should still have nothing to apprehend from the fear of want. And this consequence, as being an immediate inference from the previous truth of the principle itself, may evidently be considered primary and direct.

The next consequence which we should reasonably expect to be deduced as an equally spontaneous inference from the same principle, would be a command to dispose of those means of personal subsistence, in behalf of others, (according to their natural use and application,) for which the possessors had no longer occasion, in behalf of themselves: a command which would properly be designed in the first place for such as were rich—that is, actually possessed of more than enough for the supply of their own necessities; but secondarily even for all, who might be placed in any of the possible degrees between complete poverty and complete independence: for it is evident that it could be absolutely inapplicable only to the case of those, who were actually possessed of nothing which they could call their own. And since the personal provision which in each of these cases, was alike to be expected, in lieu of the sacrifice of personal means, and independent of personal exertions—was unreservedly promised, and was to be as fully sufficient for personal support, as freely bestowed without personal cooperation; it is to be presumed that the consequent personal obligation to dispose of their own, in behalf of others, contracted in each of the same cases, would

be absolute and unqualified also; that the sense of duty which, on such a principle and in obedience to such an obligation, enjoined the sacrifice of personal property, could involve nothing less, and admit of being satisfied with nothing less, than a *total* sacrifice; that what was no longer to be wanted in any the least degree for the use of its own possessors, was all to be given up to the service of others. But this practical consequence, as being *directly* the result of the previous conviction, that nothing was to be apprehended by the possessors of property, under such circumstances, from losing it, nothing was to be gained by retaining it, may be termed indirect with reference to the first principle of all, the assurance of an extraordinary provision in their own behalf.

Each of these antecedent presumptions of what was to be expected in the shape of practical inferences from the principle established, is found to be confirmed by the testimony of what follows. The general preliminary assurance against the evil of want, or the fear of poverty whether previously existing or voluntarily to be contracted, is contained in the thirty-second verse: the consequent special directions, for the use and disposal of property after a corresponding manner, in the rest of the verses to the end of the section.

"Fear not, my little flock: for your Father (*literally*, the Father of you) hath been well-pleased to "give you the kingdom." More than *one* argument is contained in this *one* verse, as it may be easy to shew; though each of them conspires to one result; which is to fortify the minds of the hearers against the fear of want. For first, there is, in the words,

" Fear not," an assurance against the sense of a certain fear: which as all fear is occasioned by the apprehension of some evil, either near at hand or remote, must be an assurance against the sense of a certain evil. Amidst the possible variety of evils, all calculated to raise the sense of fear, which might be meant, none can agree to the circumstances of the allusion to it, or be the particular evil meant in the present instance, but the evil of want. The whole discourse hitherto has turned on this one subject, the supply of the necessities of life; the tenor of every argument and every motive hitherto proposed, to convince the understanding or to influence the conduct of the hearers, has been to justify the expectation of a constant, though an extraordinary, provision for that supply, in their own behalf. If so, it would be absurd to suppose, that though no object of fear is specified as the object of the present assurance against it, any can be intended but the object of the fear of want; or any fear of evil in general be forbidden, but the fear of such an evil as that of want in particular.

The same conclusion is implied by the apostrophe to the disciples themselves, " My little flock"—(τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον)—which though addressed to them apparently as a mere characteristic appellation, however endearing, is found upon examination, really to contain a strong ground of encouragement against such an apprehension as this; the apprehension and fear of want. The words, " My little flock," in fact, are not so much a mode of addressing the disciples of Christ by a mere personal designation, as of describing them by the most appropriate circumstance of their relation to Christ. Fully expressed,

the address would have stood as follows; "Fear not "ye, who are my little flock:" the very statement of which must shew that it was designed to furnish a reason and motive of confidence, against the apprehension of want.

For, if the disciples of Christ in their peculiar relation to him, are represented as his flock, Christ himself, who must stand in a correlative situation to them, is represented as their Shepherd. Hence, from the nature of reciprocal relations, and especially of such a relation as the mutual connexion and dependency subsisting between the shepherd and his flock; as obedience, attachment, confidence in their shepherd, are the duties incumbent on the sheep in respect of him, so are the protection, safekeeping, and maintenance of the flock, the duties incumbent on the shepherd in behalf of the sheep. The nature of this relation, as subsisting between Christ and his church, and the kind of duties imposed by it on each of the parties therein, would any one see more particularly set forth and described—he must turn to the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel; where he will find them portrayed and delineated under the form of an allegory, taken from the relations of pastoral life, the most beautiful, but the most mystical which the Gospels any where supply. It is the idea of this relation, the proper relation between himself and them, that our Lord by one expressive stroke forcibly brings before the eyes of his disciples; and along with it all those associations of confidence, trust, and reliance in and upon himself, as their Shepherd, which they as his sheep might justly and reasonably entertain, in reference to their maintenance, their protection, and their se-

curity[i]. And thus it is that the allusion to it serves as a ground of encouragement against the fear of evil in general, and not least of all, against the fear of want in particular.

[i] I observed upon this metaphor, when I was explaining the parable of the Good Shepherd, what an exquisite specimen of the metaphor from analogy it was; how simple and natural in its original, how just and congruous in its application. There is something, however, singularly striking in its use at present; which we may ascribe to various causes: the suddenness of its introduction, which cannot fail to take the reader by surprise; the variety of agreeable ideas, which immediately arise up along with it; its propriety, as an argument of consolation and encouragement against the special fear of want; the exquisite, though transient, view of the care and concern of Christ in behalf of his disciples, which it discloses.

The tenderness of feeling, the warmth of affection, which breathe forth in this, his unexpected apostrophe to them, are not the least obvious of its qualities. The very form of the expression, *τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον*, seems to have been purposely chosen to impress them more strongly with the conviction of their endearment to him, by exhibiting in a more striking light the true grounds on which they were endeared to him. *Ποίμνιον* is itself a diminutive, which under the circumstances of the case, must have expressed a tender regard for them; the addition of *τὸ μικρὸν* even to that, is a refinement of *ὑποκορισμὸς* in the denomination, which characterises only the more forcibly the intensity of regard for the thing.

When things are valued in proportion to their intrinsic, and not to their accidental, worth, the question of their relative magnitude as parts of a certain whole, is nothing; or rather, the less they are in comparison of other things of the same kind, the more they are esteemed and cherished on their own account. The human eye is the least in bulk of the sensible organs of the body, and yet is the most prized and beloved of all; and the apple of the eye, though the least prominent or conspicuous of the parts of the eye, is the most tenderly regarded of them. Hence it is, that *μικρόν τι* and *ἀγαπητόν τι* are almost convertible terms; and that in most languages, the forms of speech

Thirdly, a reason is actually assigned against the apprehension in question, "For your Father hath "been well pleased to give you the kingdom:" which applies most effectually to this supposition, that the apprehension itself is the fear of want. The import of such an assurance is first plainly to convey a direct intimation of the intention of God, "the Father of them," to bestow upon the disciples of his Son, the gift of his kingdom—such as we explained it above. And in conveying this intimation it is further implied by it, that by bestowing upon them his kingdom as such, he was bestowing upon them a much greater thing than the supply of the wants of life: which naturally leads to the presumption that he who designed to bestow the *greater*, could never be averse to give the *less*. This presumption is further confirmed by the fact that the gift of the kingdom itself, though so much greater and more valuable a boon, was still a gra-

in which the sensations of natural affection, when warmest and tenderest, most readily express themselves towards their objects, are modifications of strict propriety in the use of words, which by apparently diminishing the real nature of the objects themselves, that is, by making them appear less and more insignificant of their kind than they really are, only enhance the supposed estimation of their worth; only make them appear the dearer and more valuable, in the opinion at least of those, who so express themselves towards them. Compared with the rest of the Jewish community, the handful of followers who believed in Christ might be as a grain of sand, or as a drop of water, in comparison of all the sand on the shore, or all the water in the ocean; compared with the degree of their regard in the sight of God, the reverse of their actual magnitude would express the just measure and determinate extent of his love. The fewer the disciples were, the dearer also to God they were; and the fewer they might be, the dearer to him they would become.

tuitous act of kindness, an effect of the pure *good pleasure* of God, a demonstration of his simple *good-will*, in *their* behalf who received it. This was a proof of the degree of his benevolence towards them, and of the place which they held in his affections, that could leave no room for doubting whether any thing else, however essential to their welfare yet still inferior to such a gift—would be even more readily bestowed by him from the impulse of the same good-will towards them, than the gift of the kingdom had been. It would convey, therefore, the strongest assurance against the dread of want; for God could never be willing to allow the future heirs of his kingdom—whom he himself of his own accord and simple good-pleasure, had already appointed to that high honour and blessed distinction—to want any needful thing, in their pilgrimage to it through life.

From all these reasons it appears, that the object of the first admonition, inculcated upon the eviction of the principle itself, is to convey a direct assurance against the apprehension, and the fear of the consequences of the evil, of want. Let us now consider what is commanded to be done next, as the immediate effect of such an assurance, for the disposal of property which might previously be possessed.

The command is contained in the 33d and 34th verses, "Sell your possessions, and give *them as* "alms; make unto yourselves purses which grow "not old, a treasure in heaven, that is not to be "forsaken, where thief approacheth not, neither doth "moth destroy: for where your treasure is, there "will your heart be also:" from which expressions,

it is easy to prove, that the command enjoins nothing less than a total alienation of their own property by the possessors, from themselves, and an entire appropriation of it all, in behalf of the poor and indigent.

For first, the command to *sell* their *possessions*, being delivered in such general terms, must be understood to require the *sale* of every species of property which might be exchanged or parted with for *money*. Now there is no kind or description of property, except money alone, which is not capable of being measured by, and therefore reduced into, money. An injunction, then, like this, to sell their possessions, in the first place, could not be understood by the hearers to mean less, nor, if intended to be actually obeyed, to require the performance of less, than the conversion of *all* their property, of whatever kind, money only excepted, whether lands, or houses, or effects, into money, the receipt, residuum, and produce of their sale.

A command, however, to convert property of one kind into property merely equivalent to it, of another, which is all that is done by the mere exchange *per se* of possessions of any other sort, for money, would be practically idle and superfluous, unless it were designed for a further end and purpose. It might be concluded, then, that the required conversion of every other kind of property into the shape of money, was only a preliminary act, necessary to the disposal of the property itself in some way, for disposing of it in which way its most convenient form would be money. It appears, accordingly, that the required conversion of property into money is not a *final* act, but intended for the

sake of an use to be made of the money afterwards: for the same ὑπάρχοντα, or possessions which are first commanded to be sold, are next directed to be given in alms. Property of every kind may be alienated from its preexisting owner, and transferred to another, in a variety of ways; but such property as lands, or houses, or in short, as possessions of any kind but money itself, cannot be alienated from its former possessors, and transferred to others, in the way of charity or almsgiving, unless it is first sold and reduced to money. The previous sale then, in the present instance, is a preliminary act; of which the subsequent distribution is the final effect. As nothing therefore was to be afterwards distributed in alms which had not before been sold; so was nothing to be previously sold, which was not afterwards to be disposed of in alms. The object and effect of these acts respectively must be the one as extensive as the other; and as the effect of the sale is to dispose of all that the owners possessed for money, (money only excepted,) so the effect of the distribution is to alienate it all from them, and to transfer it to the use of the proper objects of almsgiving or charity; the poor and needy.

We shall find this conclusion, respecting the entire alienation of their own possessions by the owners of property, to such purposes, distinct from their individual use and enjoyment of it, as the offices of charity—the supply of the wants of the indigent and destitute—to be further confirmed by the testimony of the sequel of the same two verses. The object of this sequel may, as I conceive, be briefly stated as follows: the proposal of an adequate future reward for the self-denial or sacrifice, implied

in the observance of the previous command, and therefore of a sufficient motive to the act of such a sacrifice at the time, in the contemplation of such its reward.

For first, the words, " make unto yourselves," &c. which follow directly upon the injunction of the duty, prescribed just before—cannot imply less than an encouragement to its performance, grounded on the consideration of some personal consequences, to result from performing it to the performers themselves : which consequences must of course be good. An injunction to do so and so in behalf of others, and to expect or to reap such and such results in behalf of themselves, is an exhortation to the obedience of a certain command—by holding out the promise of a certain compensation; in the benefit and advantage of which compensation those who should obey the command would be as much interested themselves, as others, and not themselves might be, in the consequences of acting according to the command. Hence as the sacrifice of their personal property in behalf of others, was the instance of the personal duty incumbent on the agents, stated in the first part of the verse; so the effect to be expected from its observance in behalf of themselves, which is specified in the remainder of it, is the instance of its personal reward.

Again, between the specified instance of the performance of the duty and the implied instance of its reward, there is the same opposition as between the loss of one thing of a certain kind, and the acquisition of another of the same kind, but a much greater and nobler than it: that is to say, the sacrifice is met by a return the same in kind, but very different

in degree: from which it follows that they who have given up their all, under such circumstances, for the sake of others, instead of being losers themselves by their own act, are found to be gainers; instead of being poorer, are actually richer than before.

That this is a just representation of the state of the case, appears first, from the use of a common term of description both for the instance of the required sacrifice, and for that of the anticipated reward, expressive of their common generic or material nature; according to the well-known principle of logical science, that contraries may belong to the same genus, and come under the same denomination: from which it follows that both the thing commanded to be sacrificed, and that which is promised as its reward, are the same *in genere;* and if the one is wealth, property, possessions, the other is wealth, property, possessions also. Secondly—that notwithstanding this agreement in the material or generic nature of the two things, there is something in their formal or specific nature widely different, appears further from the marked opposition and contrast between the properties of the one and those of the other, not as both are referred to other things, but as each is compared with the other; according to another well-known maxim of logic, that the positive qualities of one of two contraries, are the negative qualities of the other; that is, that what is true of the one is false of the other, or only true when denied of the other. Thus it is, that while each of them is spoken of under the name of a purse or bag—the receptacle of money—(βαλάντιον) —and under that of a treasure—money hoarded or laid by in store—respectively—which sufficiently in-

timates their agreement in kind—their possession of a common material nature; the nature of wealth, of property, of whatever in short it is, that can be said to make rich or to constitute abundance—yet the one (the subject of the required sacrifice) is described as a purse, which does wax old, the other (the instance of the promised reward) as a purse which does not wax old; the one as a treasure which thieves may pilfer, and moth and rust may corrode and impair, the other as one which nothing can alienate, diminish, or injure; the one as what must sometime be forsaken, the other as what is never to fail; the one in short, if wealth, yet still as wealth that can be acquired and enjoyed only on earth, the other as wealth which must be acquired, and is to be possessed, in heaven; the former, consequently, an insecure, a perishable, a transitory possession, the latter, an indeprivable, an indestructible, a permanent one.

The contemplation of such an instance of the reward of the required duty as this, could not fail to supply a ground of encouragement to its performance: and we find accordingly the sufficiency of the motive to the sacrifice of temporal wealth, thus furnished by the hope and prospect of acquiring and securing thereby the possession of eternal, asserted in the last words of the section; "For where your "treasure is, there will your heart be also." The import of these words appears to be this; that as the reluctance which men feel to part with any thing that they possess, depends upon their idea of its intrinsic value, of its necessity to themselves, or the like considerations—involving the question of the comparative worth of different goods, and the com-

parative degree and intensity of the affection which is, or which ought to be, felt for them; what is known to be truly riches, and is regarded as such, may well be esteemed and valued as the most excellent, the most necessary, and the most desirable of possessions—but not, what possesses merely the show and semblance of them. It might be difficult, therefore, for the possessor to bring himself to part with a good of the former kind; but to resign one of the latter, if he were aware of its true nature, should cost him nothing. No consideration perhaps might induce him to make the sacrifice of the true riches as such; but he should require little persuasion to give up the false. In particular may the sacrifice of the false appear light and trifling, and be made at any time without scruple or reluctance, if by parting with the false he has reason to believe he shall gain the true.

Now the celestial mammon is the true riches; the temporal or earthly is but the shadow or image of the true. A command to forego the former might well be pronounced hard and grievous, were such a sacrifice to be required; for to part with that would make a man poor indeed—to renounce all personal interest in that would imply that a man was an hater of his self indeed: but a command to resign, if need be, the mere semblance and shadow of true wealth, all that goes by the name, with nothing of the reality of riches, on earth—ought to appear from the nature of the sacrifice itself, comparatively an easy thing. It requires no self-denial to part with that which is truly not worth keeping, the privation and loss of which renders its possessor really no poorer, no more than the retention and enjoyment of it, any richer;

if nothing at least be considered to make poor by its absence, or rich by its presence, which is not indispensable in point of necessity, independent in point of sufficiency, indeprivable in point of security; which is not less a man's own than himself; not less dear to his affections than himself. Much more may the command to part with the temporal mammon be cheerfully obeyed, when the resignation of that is to be followed by the acquisition of the eternal—when the present sacrifice of what has but the appearance of wealth, is to be rewarded by the future possession of the true riches. In a word, once fix the affections of self on the only proper object of desire, the treasure in heaven, and it will no longer be difficult to wean them from the attractions of any of the treasures upon earth; it will no longer appear grievous to part with the latter, for the sake of the former [k].

[k] It is in our power to produce an instance parallel to the above, when the same duty was again enforced, in the same or even more definite terms, according to the same mode of observance, and with the prospect of the same reward. It occurs in the course of our Lord's conversation, probably not many days after this time, with the rich young ruler; who inquired of him what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life: a part of the gospel history, which, on account of the great and obvious moral uses to which it is subservient, each of the three first evangelists has left on record.

When he had answered our Lord's first question about the mode of life which he had led from his youth up, this young ruler proceeded to ask, τί ἔτι ὑστερῶ; Matt. xix. 20: which we may suppose to mean, "Am I yet in want of any thing? am I, "in any respect, still short of the point necessary to perfection?" To which Jesus replied, "One thing is wanting unto thee—If "thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell thy possessions, distribute "them to the poor, (and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,)

Having thus, as I consider, proved the truth of both the assumptions, with which the above discussion was begun—*first*, that the parties addressed in the present discourse, and concerned in the observance of its precepts, were required to renounce all care in their own behalf, with a view to the supply of the ordinary wants of life, and to rely entirely on the providence of God—*secondly*, as persons actuated by such a reliance might naturally be expected to do, that they were to dispose in behalf of others, of those worldly possessions which they did not want any longer for themselves—we may reasonably, perhaps, infer that the consequent, di-

" and come, take up the cross and follow me:" Matt. xix. 21. Mark x. 21. Luke xviii. 22. Harm. P. iv. 52.

The terms of this command, and of the promise attached to its observance, St. Matthew expresses by *πώλησόν σου τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, καὶ δὸς πτωχοῖς· καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ*—St. Mark by *ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον, καὶ δὸς πτωχοῖς· καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ*—St. Luke by *πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον, καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς· καὶ ἕξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ*: whence it appears that St. Matthew's expression for the command comes nearest to the language employed on the present occasion, but that St. Luke expresses most clearly its proper meaning, as prescribing the sale of every thing which might be possessed; and so determining the sense of *ὑπάρχοντα*, in the former instance as well as in this, to include every sort of property which is capable of being sold and reduced into money; that is, all but money itself. The purpose of the sale is implied to be the same in both instances—the reduction of property into the most convenient form for distribution to the poor and needy; and the effect also—its entire distribution among such objects, and consequent total alienation from its former possessors. The reward proposed to the act is the same on both occasions—the acquisition of a treasure in heaven to compensate for the sacrifice of a treasure upon earth; and if the reward of the act—the motive proposed to its performance also.

rectly resulting from the truth of two such assumptions, viz. that the persons, who were required to entertain such a reliance, and acting in obedience to it, to dispose of the means of their own support in such a way, either were *now* or should *some* time be placed under the extraordinary providence of God—is confirmed and established even to a demonstration.

Of the questions which might still be raised from such a view of the subject, (and these are obviously neither few nor unimportant,) the two chief, I think, would be, first, supposing such an assurance to have been actually given by our Saviour to his hearers at this time, as that they might rely with confidence on an extraordinary supply of their natural wants—in what way, and to what extent, should we expect to find this supply provided, in order to verify the assurance itself: secondly, who they were, whether Christians in general or a certain class of Christians in particular, for whose benefit and encouragement we must conclude the assurance to have been intended; who would consequently be authorized to expect the provision in question, and therefore would be bound in duty, under the influence of such an expectation, to act in the disposal of their own means of support, accordingly.

With regard to the first of these inquiries, it is necessary that we should call to mind the observation which we made at the outset, in reference to the same subject—the scope and extent of the extraordinary provision in question. The promise of this support, as originally made, was confined to the most absolute and indispensable of the wants of life; without the constant supply of which existence itself

was not, for a moment, to be continued. These were reduced to the two comprehensive divisions of food and clothing; answering to the two constituent parts of human nature, in the union of which its vitality itself consists, viz. the soul (ψυχὴ) and the body (σῶμα;) one of them, consequently, including whatever is requisite to the continuance of that union so far as concerns the soul, the other so far as concerns the body. The verification of the promise, then, even of an extraordinary provision for the constant supply of the constant wants, whether of the soul or of the body, under the circumstances of the case, must still be restricted to the supply of their most essential necessities; and cannot in justice be supposed to require any thing beyond that.

We may contend, therefore, that the letter of the assurance would be abundantly satisfied in favour of the parties for whose benefit it was intended, should it appear that by any means whatever, independent of themselves, and without the necessity of their personal forethought, cost, or labour, a daily, never-failing supply of the necessities of life would be provided for them. More than this, the conditions of the promise would give no reason to expect; though less might be insufficient for its performance. The word of God might be pledged to keep such and such persons, without any care or concern of their own, and without the use of their personal resources, from wanting enough for their temporal welfare — from wanting any necessary thing; but not to supply them with more than enough, with more than the necessities, much less with the luxuries and superfluities, of life. It might be pledged in short to protect them from the evils and

privations of poverty; but not to furnish them with the indulgences and enjoyments of affluence.

Nor, if common or natural means were capable of being rendered adequate to the production of such an effect, ought it to surprise us that common or natural means should be found to be employed rather than uncommon or preternatural. The end might still be the same—the verification of a divine promise, the production of an extraordinary effect—though human agency, or means partaking no further of the character of extraordinary, than as concerned the nature of the purpose to which they were rendered instrumental, were employed to bring it to pass. It would be contrary to the course of the divine œconomy in the production even of miraculous effects, to accomplish by means of supernatural power directly, what natural causes might be enabled indirectly to bring to pass: nor was it to be expected that because the word of God stood pledged to maintain the disciples of Jesus Christ in food and clothing, after a manner independent of their own exertions, and so far different from usual, the divine power should necessarily work a miracle every time they might require a dinner, or stand in need of a change of garments. In other instances, where the same divine power was actually exerted to produce the same kind of effect, though the first exercise of that power might be supernatural and extraordinary, yet the mode of its operation, when once begun to be exerted, was stated and regular. It was so in the case of the provision made for the extraordinary support of Elijah, during a time of famine so far as regarded the rest of the Israelites. The Jews of old were supplied with food in the wilderness, after a preter-

natural manner; but when the provision of manna had once been made, its supply ever after was constant and uniform. Nor do we read that the apparel or sandals of the people, during the same period, were by the divine agency miraculously renewed or changed, as often as they were worn out; but merely that the clothes with which they first quitted Egypt, were after an extraordinary manner, during their sojourn in the wilderness, kept from decaying and wearing out: which was so far to produce a preternatural effect, but certainly not by supernatural means [1].

With respect to the second question—I think it may be shewn, first by an argument *a priori*, or from the necessity of the case, and secondly by an argument *a posteriori*, or from historical testimony, that the parties addressed are the believing Jews, in contradistinction as much to the believing Gentiles, as to the unbelieving Jews; and considered as forming the congregation of the first Christian church, the Hebrew church, or mother church of Jerusalem. This being established, as that church was not yet in being, it follows that the persons addressed in this part of the discourse, are addressed in a capacity which they did not now sustain, but which they came to sustain afterwards; consequently, that the original plan of the discourse, such as we have seen to pervade its former divisions, is now resumed; and the harmony of its several parts, which the preceding interruption had somewhat deranged, is, with an exquisite refinement of address on the part of the

1 "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy "foot swell, these forty years." Deut. viii. 4. Cf. Deut. xxix. 5. which adds, their shoes also.

speaker, and an evident propriety in the means employed for the purpose, again restored.

That the persons addressed in this part of the discourse are the disciples in general, requires no proof. Now the disciples in general admitted, at this time, of no division except into those who were, and those who were not, apostles in particular, though all might be believers in Jesus, and all followers of him, in common. Of the twelve apostles in particular, however, we can understand neither the preliminary promise of an extraordinary provision, as *now* delivered but not until *henceforth* to be realized by the event—nor the consequent command to dispose of their all in charity—to have been properly intended; first, because the twelve in particular were already living in the enjoyment of such a kind of provision in their own behalf—resembling so far their Master himself; the supply of their necessities during the course of his ministry, being furnished by the voluntary bounty of believers in Jesus, prompted by piety and devotion to minister out of their own substance, to his wants, and to those of the apostles his regular attendants[m]: secondly, because the apostles had already given up or renounced *their all*, to follow and attach themselves to Christ; a fact which the evangelists are careful to record[n], and of which St. Peter, in an instance that we considered at large in the twelfth chapter of the General Introduction, part i.[o] was not backward to remind our Saviour.

[m] Luke viii. 2, 3. Harm. P. iii. 11. Cf. Matt. viii. 20. Harm. P. iii. 20. Luke x. 38—42. Harm. P. iv. 28. Mark xv. 41. Harm. P. iv. 102.

[n] Luke v. 11. Harm. P. ii. 14: Luke v. 28. Harm. P. ii. 27.

[o] Matt. xix. 27. Mark. x. 28. Luke xviii. 28. Harm. P. iv. 53.

It follows, then, that each of these things must be understood of the rest of the disciples and followers of Christ; concerning whom we have no reason to assume, (but rather every reason to the contrary,) that they were as yet placed under any such extraordinary superintendence of Providence, or ever had been—except perhaps the seventy, during the short period of their absence on their mission[p]—or had as yet ceased to retain the usual right of property in their own possessions, or the ordinary privilege of applying them to their own use[q]. This, therefore, is

[p] Luke x. 1—8. Harm. P. iv. 26: Cf. Matt. x. 1—15. Mark vi. 7—11. Luke ix. 1—5. Harm. P. iii. 26: Luke xxii. 35. Harm. P. iv. 88.

[q] When our Lord is addressing his disciples, whether along with the apostles or not, it is commonly taken for granted that he addresses them as Christians; but it has not been sufficiently attended to by commentators, that he addresses them as *future* Christians *in general*, and as *future Hebrew* Christians *in particular*; as members of a church not yet established, and when established, designed to be the only one in existence for a considerable length of time, and always to stand distinguished from every subsequent Christian society in several characteristic respects.

But if he addressed them in their future capacity of Christians at all, in what capacity but as that of future members of this church could he address them in particular? If so, however, the rule of duty which might be prescribed to them, in that capacity, it was very probable, *a priori*, might not be such as should be binding on Christians in general. It may even be contended, with a great show of reason, that no part of our Lord's own moral teaching, which we do not find to be repeated, reenforced, and confirmed by that of his apostles, was probably intended for any but his contemporaries during his personal presence on earth, that is, the Hebrew Christians, after the expiration of his ministry. This principle appears to me so important to the right understanding of the Gospels, and so calculated to reflect light on our Saviour's discourses, and withal so little

the argument *a priori*, or from the necessity of the case, on the strength of which we are authorized to conclude that the parties, for whose benefit the promise of an extraordinary interposition of Providence was to be expected, and consequently for whose observance the obligation of the duty to dispose of their possessions for eleemosynary purposes was prescribed, were the Hebrew Christians in particular; the members of the first, and for a time the only Christian society in the world, after the Christian church came to be established [r].

attended to by commentators, that it might well deserve to be confirmed, by a general inductive argument, founded on a review of all, or the most important instances of our Lord's moral instructions, recorded in the Gospels.

[r] If the command to sell their possessions, and to give away the proceeds in charity had never been delivered before, it could not have been observed before: and even though we supposed it to have been both given to and intended for our Lord's disciples exclusively, on the present occasion, yet under the circumstances of the case, it could not have been complied with, nor therefore have been designed to be complied with, at the time, even by them. Our Lord was on his last progress to Jerusalem, journeying from place to place, intending to arrive there at last. At the period of this discourse, he was probably not many days' journey distant from the end of his circuit. His disciples generally, besides an immense multitude of the people of the country, and not merely his apostles—had been with him ever since he left Capernaum to begin this progress, and never quitted him, that we know of, or have reason to believe, until he arrived at Bethany. It is inconceivable then, how a command to dispose of all kinds of property in the way of sale, and to distribute the proceeds in alms; a work necessarily requiring time and opportunity, both in the preliminary arrangements for it and in the execution of it—though now given, could now have been carried into effect; and therefore have been meant to be.

The argument *a posteriori* is the reverse of this, and presupposes the truth and justness of the presumption on which the argument *a priori* is founded. For, if we are right in the conclusion to which this presumption leads, then, if the promise of an extraordinary support, was ever fulfilled in behalf of the persons for whom it was intended, and if the command to dispose accordingly of their own possessions, was ever obeyed by them—those persons in each case being the original Hebrew Christians; the

This difficulty is still more evident of the repetition of the command to the rich young ruler, if that was intended to be immediately executed; for our Lord was then only one day's journey from Jerusalem, that is, from his journey's end. The young man had many possessions; (ἦν ἔχων κτήματα πολλά·) yet he is told to sell all, and to give away all. Could this have been done on the spot, or in one day's time? Impossible. What then must we suppose our Lord to have required him to do at the time? To form a *bona fide* resolution to dispose of his possessions, in the way prescribed, when the proper time should arrive, which our Lord himself knew was not far distant; and in the strength of that resolution, as an evidence of his present intention of self-denial, and an earnest of his future execution of it, to enroll himself among the followers of our Lord, to come and join his train, without further hesitation or delay. But this was more than he was prepared to submit to; and therefore instead of cheerfully complying with the request, he went away dejected, and very sorrowful, (περίλυπος σφόδρα.)

When Zaccheus, not long after, in the course of the same day, stood forth and publicly declared before our Lord his intention of disposing of one half of his property to the poor, Jesus did not require him further to give up the whole. Why not? Probably, because even the sacrifice of half his possessions was a voluntary offer, proceeding from Zaccheus himself; and because, as we may justly presume, that sacrifice was to take place immediately, and would be carried into effect as soon after the promise of it was made, as possible.

matter of fact, or the truth of history itself may be expected to bear witness to this result, and to confirm the presumption with respect to these persons, by the evidence of the event.

Now the Acts of the Apostles contains the history of the early Hebrew church, from its first foundation downwards; and while it was the only Christian society in the world, exclusively so—as well as, though not so exclusively—for a long time after, when other churches also were in existence. In this history, then, if any where, must we expect to find the necessary proofs both of the performance of the promise, and of the observance of the command—in the fact of the provision of an extraordinary means of support in behalf of the members of the society on one hand, and that of an extraordinary disposal or appropriation of property, in consequence of such a provision, by every member of the same on the other. There are, accordingly, various descriptions of the constitution of the early Hebrew church, to be met with in this history; which I think are clear and convincing documents of a state of things, always designed to exist therein and critically in accommodation to what our above reasonings would have led us to anticipate of any Christian society, which was intended to be regulated by such principles as we have supposed.

It ought to be remembered too, that this description of the peculiar constitution of the Hebrew church from the first, proceeds from the pen of the same historian who only has recorded the present discourse of our Lord, in which those principles of belief were inculcated, and those rules of action were prescribed, which, if entertained and applied in prac-

tice, could not fail to give birth to the peculiarities of constitution in question. The very language too of the description of the resulting state of things, as soon as the Hebrew or original church came into being, is so exactly adapted both to the terms of the discourse, before related, and to what on every principle of consistency was to be expected from the literal performance of such a promise on the part of God, and the literal execution of such a command on the part of the disciples or believers in Christ; that a man would be very sceptical, who should entertain a doubt whether St. Luke, when he gave such an account, had it not as much in view to attest the fulfilment of that promise, in order to the proof of the veracity of our Saviour—and the compliance of the disciples with those stipulated conditions, on which only it was covenanted to them, for the sake of evincing their faith and obedience; as to do justice to the truth of things, or to discharge his duty simply as an historian of an actual series of events.

The particulars of the descriptions to which I refer, are such as these: "And they were steadfastly "engaged in attending to the teaching of the apo- "stles, and to the communion, and to the breaking "of the bread, and to prayers. And *in* every soul "there was fear; and many wonders and signs "came to pass by means of the apostles. And all "they who were believing, were in the same case, "and had (used to have) all things in common; and "sold (used to sell) their possessions and the things "which belonged to them; and they divided (used "to divide) them out among all, according as any "one might have need. And day by day, with one

" accord steadfastly attending in the temple, and " breaking bread at home, they partook (used to " partake) of subsistence in gladness and singleness " of heart, praising God, and having grace towards " all the people. And the Lord day by day added " (used to add) to the church (the congregation) " them that were saved (were saving themselves)." Acts ii. 42—47.

" And of the multitude of them who had believed, " the heart and the soul were one: and not even " did one *of them* say that of the things which be- " longed to him *ought* was his own, but all things " were common unto them. And with great power " did the apostles render the testimony of the re- " surrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was " there upon all of them. For neither was there " any one among them that lacked *ought;* for as " many as were possessors of lands or houses, selling " them, brought (used to bring) the prices of the " things which were selling, and laid (used to lay) " *them* at the feet of the apostles: and to each " *of them* distribution was made (used to be made) " according as any one might have need." Acts iv. 32—35. Cf. iv. 36, 37: v. 1—11: vi. 1.

Upon this account we may remark so far as our argument requires it, that it appears from it first, that individual converts, who were before possessed of property, whether more or less, upon becoming members of the Hebrew church as originally constituted, divested themselves of it: secondly, that the method by which they did this, was the method which we have seen to be prescribed above, the method of sale, of reducing possessions of any kind which admitted of being so reduced, into money:

thirdly, that the object of doing this, was the object also prescribed by the text, that property before possessed might be reduced to the most convenient form for being transferred to the use of others, independent of the possessors themselves.

Fourthly, we observe that the particular use to which the property reduced to this form was actually applied, was agreeable to the use prescribed in the text; the proceeds resulting from the sale of possessions in every instance, going to constitute a bank or stock, for the benefit of all in common; of which for a time, and until the ordination of deacons, the apostles were the dispensers or managers. Fifthly, that out of this common fund all whosoever had need, and to whatsoever extent they had need, whether more or less, had their necessities supplied. "They divided (*or* used to divide) them out among "all, according as any one might have need—And "to each *of them* distribution was made (*or* used to "be made) according as any one might have need." Sixthly, that the provision so made for the necessities of every member of the church, was not only a daily, but a sufficient and never-failing one: under the circumstances of the case, there was none who did not benefit in the necessary proportion from it, or who stood in want of more than he thus received: "For neither was there any one among them that "lacked *ought*."

Seventhly, we see that this state of things was not of slight duration; for between the first allusion to it, Acts ii. 42, and the last, which we find mentioned, Acts v. 1, the interval was seven years; and there is no reason to believe that it did not continue to be the distinguishing state of things in the church

of Jerusalem, as well after that time as before it. Eighthly, there is no evidence either in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the Epistles, that any church, distinct from the original church among the Jews, and formed subsequently among the Gentiles, was modelled and constituted on the plan of a perfect equality and community of property among its members, like this; nor is there reason to believe that any other church ever was so, from the beginning to the end of the gospel history itself. Such a state of things was consequently peculiar to the Hebrew church, and as unexampled elsewhere afterwards, as unprecedented before. There never was until then, nor ever has been since, an instance of a society of Christians, living in the world, so principled as this: the condition of entering into which was the sacrifice of all a man before possessed with the loss of his own exclusive right in it, and enjoyment of it, and the consequence of continuing to belong to which was the necessity of living together, and being supported in common. Without the known command of God, then, we may presume, such a society never would have been formed originally; and without his especial providence and support it never could have long subsisted.

It appears, moreover, that this alienation of property by its former owners, to the use of the whole society, was supposed to be much more incumbent on the Jews of the mother country—who would of course have property at home,—than on those of any other description, who might have property elsewhere: for it is mentioned of Barnabas, that though a Jew of Cyprus, yet having a *possession*, (which we may justly presume is intended of a pos-

session in his native island, and not any where in Judæa,) he sold it, and brought the price and laid it at the apostles' feet. This fact is recorded as a circumstance particularly to his honour; and therefore we may fairly suppose that it was a circumstance peculiar to his case; viz. an instance of self-denial and a sacrifice of property, in a Jew of the dispersion, not otherwise incumbent on Jews of the dispersion as such; not binding on them, as it might be on Jews of the mother country, but left to their own option, to make or to withhold it, as they liked best themselves.

It appears too, that the alienation of property from its former owners, which this fundamental law of the society enjoined, though voluntary before it was made, was absolute and final when made. The case of Ananias and Sapphira, which seems to have been purposely related more plainly to set forth this truth, very clearly proves, that in parting with his possessions at all, or in reducing them previously to money with that view, no one acted by compulsion; that until he sold his possessions, they were his own, and when he had sold them, until he brought the money to be added to the common stock, their value was still his own: but that if he proposed to add it to the common stock, he was bound to add it all: to withhold any part of the value, or to tender a part instead of the whole, was an injury done to the rights of the community, and a fraud attempted against the Holy Ghost.

Lastly, so long as this state of things continued, it was competent to answer the purposes of a standing provision for the necessities of the church; in the benefit of which while all who belonged to the

society would partake alike, so far as the supply of their daily wants was concerned—it cannot be denied that, considering the means out of which that supply was provided, the poorest and neediest of its members originally, would partake most largely. Those means were provided by the freewill offerings, by the voluntary sacrifices of the rich; of such at least as had property to part with, and to contribute to the common stock. The proportion of the poor originally too, must have been much greater than that of the rich; which being the case, the final end for which these parted with their property, and devoted it to the use of the church, might strictly be said to be eleemosynary and charitable; as designed for the support of those who had not the means of supporting themselves. The extraordinary interposition of Providence would consequently consist in keeping up and maintaining inviolate for any length of time, so remarkable a constitution of things, and intended to answer such a purpose as this of a standing provision for the supply of the wants of all, and more particularly of the indigent members of the community, at the expense more or less of all, but especially of the richer and more affluent; yet under the circumstances of the case, alike independently of the personal care, the personal industry, the personal forethought, and the actual personal cost of any above the rest.

It appears too, from the same account, that as the conduct of the Hebrew Christians, in divesting themselves of all on which they had been accustomed to depend before, for their own support, and by retaining which in their possession they might have continued to provide for that support still—

displayed an absolute reliance on Providence, and therefore is the strongest proof that they were actuated by a belief in the promise of some extraordinary provision to be made for their own wants; so did their behaviour in other respects, evince a consciousness of the condition on which, and which alone, as we have seen, the assurance of such a provision was authoritatively conveyed in the present instance—as well as a personal solicitude on their part to comply with it. This condition was that of the exclusive or predominant pursuit of the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God, in the first place; as enforced by the promise of the supply of the most needful wants of existence, to be gratuitously bestowed, in the next.

St. Luke bears testimony to the mode of life, in which the members of the church of Jerusalem from the first, were wont to pass their time; a mode of life which exhibits the clearest proofs of a sublime and fervent piety, intent on nothing but the spiritual concerns of the present life, and to all appearance totally without a thought about its temporal. The particulars of their daily occupations he has reduced to these four heads; προσευχαὶ, the διδαχὴ of the apostles, κοινωνία, and the κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου: the first of which points distinctly to a religious act or employment, properly so called, the adoration of the Supreme Being by prayers and supplications: the second must be understood of the teaching or instruction of the people (or congregation of believers) by the apostles, both in matters of faith and in duties of morality—both by the interpretation of the scriptures of the Old Testament, and by the communication of the truths and doctrines

of the New: the third, of the intercourse and communion of the members of the church among each other, more especially their living in common, and having all things in common; which may be said to be the description of their social or domestic mode of life, when they were not engaged upon the public duties of religion, and meeting together for the purpose of prayer to God and of receiving instruction from the apostles, in the temple: the fourth, of the celebration of the eucharist, or the breaking of *the bread*, properly so called. If this is a just description of the principles and predilections, the habits and occupations of the members of the first Christian church, we need no other proof of the existence of a society actuated by a truly religious frame of mind; whose desires and affections, whose aspirations and endeavours, were more uniformly directed to the righteousness of God in the present life, with a view to the kingdom of God in the next.

If we proceed to inquire into the probable final end of a constitution or modification of society, so peculiar in itself as this, and so exclusively designed, as it appears, for *one*, and that the *first* instance of a Christian community in the world, the church planted among the Jews and confined to the precincts of Jerusalem; various reasons may perhaps be assigned, which in some measure will serve to answer that question. Our Saviour, we observed, placed it implicitly upon the ground of the good-will of God, their Father, towards his *little flock;* his own original followers, or the earliest of his future converts. Nor is it surprising, that the good-pleasure of God should vouchsafe an especial mark of his favour in behalf of this little flock of his Son, in

particular; who besides being the true spiritual seed of Abraham and of the fathers, were their true natural seed also; whose were the covenant—the promises—and the adoption—of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ himself came—who were for a time the only instance which the world had seen, or was intended to see, of the practical effects of Christian piety and devotion—Christian purity and holiness—Christian self-denial and disinterestedness—Christian charity and benevolence: the first, and as yet the sole examples of Christian patience, Christian faith, Christian constancy and resignation; the first to bear the name of Christ, and to publish his glory to all the world, in the face of opposition, persecution, obloquy, and death; for a time the only light of the world, the only salt of the earth, and always so, among their own countrymen in particular; from whose bosom too, in due time, went forth the feet of the messengers of the glad tidings of salvation to all the nations of mankind.

Many blessed and most beneficial effects, it is obvious, might be the result of the existing state of things in the Hebrew church, extraordinary as it was—not merely to the Christian Jews themselves, but to the unbelieving also. Much there must have been in it, not only to attract the attention, but to raise the wonder, to deserve the admiration, to conciliate the good-will even of these last; and to persuade them of the truth of a religion, so powerful in its practical influences, so beneficial in its tendencies to the temporal welfare and happiness of its professors, so singularly protected by Providence, so visibly favoured with the divine blessing. There

was no such thing as a poor person in this community; and yet there was no such thing as a rich one! nobody possessed any thing, yet nobody wanted for any thing! In what society but this Christian one, not actually detached from the world, not totally abstracted from the common duties of life—was such a phenomenon before or afterwards to be seen? There was no distinction of rank or privilege, no difference of means or fortune among the members of this community; all were peers in personal dignity; all had the same rights; all were alike partners in the ownership of property, and alike sharers in its use and enjoyment. What exemplary self-denial; what genuine humility, on the part of the rich; what tenderness and indulgence to the poor; what peculiar honour and elevation bestowed on the latter, with no degradation or abasement on the part of the former; what mutual attachment; what sincere charity; what harmony and concord; did these things evince in all, or tend to excite in all, one towards another!

The equalization of external circumstances, produced by the voluntary resignation of every man's individual possessions for the benefit of the whole society, compensated as it was in return by a reciprocal sacrifice on the part of the rest, of what was theirs; the consequence of which would be, that though each had given up and lost his own, yet he had succeeded to the common use and enjoyment of many times his own: may be considered the literal fulfilment of our Saviour's promise, "There is no "man who hath forsaken an house, or brethren, or "sisters, or a father, or a mother, or a wife, or "children, or lands, for the sake of me and of the

" Gospel; but who shall receive an hundredfold " now in this season, houses, and brethren, and " sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *to-* " *gether* with persecutions; and in the period of " ages which is coming, life everlasting[s]." For it is evident concerning this promise of a return to be made in kind for sacrifices previously made, where so many instances of things sacrificed, and all so different, are specified as alike to be requited in kind, that the peculiar nature or mode of the return to be made for one particular sacrifice, must be like that of the return to be similarly made for another; and consequently that the sacrifice of such articles as houses or lands, that is, property in general, was to be compensated by a return in kind in the same sense as the sacrifice of a mother, or a sister, that is of natural relations in general. If the proper sacrifice of the latter, then, in the nature of things neither was, nor could be, to be rewarded by the acquisition of the same things manifold, in the same proper sense as before, neither was that of the former. But if the sacrifice of relations in the *natural* sense, for the sake of the Gospel, was to be compensated to the individual believer bereaved thereof, by the acquisition of many more in the *spiritual* sense; that is, of fathers, mothers, brethren and sisters of the faith—of relations in short, united together in the community of faith and hope, by the bonds of a spiritual union and attachment, as close and as endearing as the tenderest and strictest ties of natural sympathy and affection: so might the loss of property to the individual owner of it, be compensated

[s] Mark x. 29, 30. Cf. Matt. xix. 29. Luke xviii. 29, 30. Harm. P. iv. 53.

by the acquisition of a right to the property of others: and on the supposition of a community of possessions among the members of the Hebrew church, it would actually be so; since, though each individually, by entering into such a society, might cease to retain any thing of his own, yet by continuing to belong to it, he was admitted, nevertheless, to the enjoyment of many times his own.

So long as the Hebrew church was the only Christian society in the world, this peculiarity of its constitution would be a palpable mark of discrimination between Christians and the rest of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles: and it has been seen that the duty of taking no thought for the morrow was inculcated as particularly incumbent upon the disciples, for this reason among others; viz. to draw a broad line of distinction between the disciples, who believed in Christ, and the rest of the world, who did not. This peculiarity seems a necessary consequence, too, of that exemplary charity and self-denial which were especially to be exacted from those, who should be first called upon to imitate in practice the great model of Christian perfection, Christ himself; and which might be exacted with great propriety from them, as his scholars and disciples in the strictest sense of the word—as bound by reasons peculiar to themselves, to emulate the example which he had set them, even above the rest of their Christian brethren. If greater activity was to be required from them as the first ministers of Christianity; if a less degree of abstraction from temporal pursuits, and a less complete devotion to spiritual ones, not merely by way of pattern or prototype to future believers, but even for the discharge of their delegated

official functions, would have been incompatible with their proper relations to Christ and to his church; if it was but in the nature of things, that the interests of a rising society, of an infant religion as it were, should demand more exclusive care and attention on the part of those who had to found it originally, and to bring it into being, as well as to fashion and mould it afterwards for perpetuity—to foster in short, and to nourish it from infancy to maturity; if it was agreeable to antecedent probability, that a more ardent warmth of personal affection, a deeper intensity of personal interest, a more glowing zeal and enthusiasm, would be felt and displayed by those who were embarking for the first time on a great and important business—in favour of its proper concerns and objects: this peculiar constitution of the first Christian church, by which its members were relieved from all care or anxiety about themselves, afforded free scope and opportunity for all these things—both for the discharge of delegated duties, for the satisfaction of acknowledged obligations, and for the indulgence and operation of natural feelings.

It is to be remembered too, that the promise of an extraordinary Providence for the supply of the temporal wants of the Hebrew Christians—that is, of a part of the Jews of our Saviour's day—even if realized, would be after all, only the revival of the privilege, anciently possessed by their fathers on a large and comprehensive scale. It is not more surprising that a portion of the Jewish community should thus be taken for a longer or a shorter period, under the special protection of the divine Providence—than that the whole of their nation should have been so, during their forty years' sojourn in the

wilderness. The promise of the life that now is, upon condition of obedience to the declared will of God, was the proper sanction of the covenant of Horeb. What wonder, that the same promise should be repeated on the same conditions, to the descendants of the same people; accompanied too, as it was, with the promise of the life to come? a promise confined to the family of faith among the Jews, and compared with which, the promise of the life that now is, might justly be considered a mere appendage or superfluity of kindness; the absence of which could detract nothing from the independent, intrinsic value of the other gift; nor its presence add to its sufficiency and perfection by itself.

Perhaps, however, the true explanation of the reason of this constitution of the Hebrew church, from the time of its first formation and for some time after, is to resolve it into the purposes of the divine Providence, with regard to the punishment to be inflicted on the unbelieving part of the Jewish community, for the specific crime of their infidelity. It was naturally to be expected that the believing part of this community, who did not share in the guilt of that crime, should be exempted from sharing in its consequences; and a little consideration will teach us, that supposing the ultimate punishment of the unbelieving Jews, in some appropriate way, on the one hand, and the ultimate preservation of the believing ones from all such penal effects, on the other, to have been contemplated from the first, no form or constitution of society in the Hebrew church originally and for some time after, was so likely to promote this object, as that which we find to have been actually established in it.

The effect of the Jewish war, that great retributive dispensation for the punishment of the national sin of infidelity, was destined to be the dissolution of the Jewish community both ecclesiastical and civil; the loss of their place and nation; the destruction of Jerusalem; and the wreck of all property, both public and private. A provision, then, which had already imposed on every Hebrew Christian, the obligation of parting with his temporal possessions, when he became a member of the church, while it had taken the necessary precautions to secure meanwhile, the maintenance of the whole body, must have guarded effectually beforehand against the possibility of any one of the believing Jews' being involved in the same calamities, and suffering in the same way from the national visitation, as the rest of his countrymen. What had previously been sold by the believing Jews, and had ceased to be their property, had come of course into the hands of the unbelieving; and would perish in the universal ruin of property, produced by the general convulsion which ultimately ensued. But its *bona fide* value had already been enjoyed, or might still continue to be enjoyed, by the Hebrew church. Money is at all times the most convenient form of property, not only for disposing of it in such and such a way, but also for securing it against the possibility of loss or deprivation, and for removing it readily from a scene of trouble or danger, to one of tranquillity and safety. If the wealth of the believing Jews consisted in a pecuniary fund—in a time of public peace, and during an established order of things, it would be as safe and inviolable as any other species of property; and in a season of confusion or disorder, of risk or uncer-

tainty, should any such arise, it is manifest it would be the least endangered; it would be the most easy to secure, the most convenient to remove elsewhere, and to deposit out of the reach of destruction, of any.

And for this reason, it is most probable that this particular state of things in the Hebrew church, though unexampled and extraordinary while it lasted, was designed to continue no longer than the final consummation of the Jewish visitation; that is, in fact, than the natural period of the lifetime of that generation, to which the assurance of an extraordinary support, and the command to act accordingly in the disposal of their own property, were both given. This period, if we reckon from the day of the ascension, A. D. 30. to the capture of Jerusalem, A. D. 70. embraced an interval of nearly forty years; the length of time for which the Israelites of old, as I have already observed, had wandered, and been maintained in an extraordinary manner in the wilderness, before their settlement in the land of Canaan.

I shall conclude this exposition of the present part of the discourse, by pointing out one or two of the immediate advantages, which are derived from referring both the promise of an extraordinary support, and the command of the disposal of property, founded upon that promise, to Jews and not to Gentiles, in the first place, and to the believing not the unbelieving Jews, in the next. First, by such a reference, we do no violence to the words of scripture, but read them just as we find them, and understand them just as we read them. We reconcile our Saviour's teaching on the duty of taking no

thought, or making no provision for the morrow, first with itself, as addressed to the multitude at large; on whom, by prohibiting to them only an immoderate degree of such taking of thought, he inculcated a prudent and moderate degree of it; whereas, in addressing his disciples immediately after, he inculcates the taking no thought at all; he prohibits even the moderate and prudent degree of it[t]: and secondly, with the teaching of his apostles, none of whom, when instructing his Gentile converts in the duties of their several stations, ever thinks of dissuading them from industry in the exercise of their calling, diligence in their application to business, or a prudent and circumspect use of present means and opportunities, for the sake of future wants and necessities; and of whom St. Paul in particular—as if to denounce expressly the abuse of the doctrine of taking no thought to purposes for which it was never intended, as justifying the conduct of moral agents generally or of Christians in particular, who should be guilty of a systematic neglect and carelessness in making the necessary provision for the wants of life in behalf of themselves and of those immediately dependent upon them—has left this remarkable sentence on record: "But if any one doth not provide for those who

[t] The literal construction of the precepts in question furnished Celsus with a pretence for objecting to the doctrine or teaching of Christ in the New Testament, as repugnant to that of the Father in the Old. Ὁ δ' υἱὸς ἄρα αὐτοῦ, says he, ὁ Ναζωραῖος ἄνθρωπος, ἀντινομοθετεῖ, μηδὲ παριτητὸν εἶναι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, τῷ πλουτοῦντι, ἢ φιλαρχιῶντι, ἢ σοφίας ἢ δόξης ἀντιποιουμένῳ. δεῖν δὲ σίτων μὲν καὶ ταμιείου μὴ μᾶλλόν τι φροντίζειν ἢ τοὺς κόρακας, ἐσθῆτος δὲ ἧττον ἢ τὰ κρίνα, κ', τ. λ. Origen, i. 706. E. Contr. Cels. vii. 18.

" belong to himself, and most of all for those of his " own family, he hath denied the faith, and is worse " than an unbeliever [u]."

We reconcile the teaching of our Saviour on almsgiving also, first with itself, as addressed to the Pharisees a little before; on whom he impressed the obligation of that duty, in proportion to their ability only, (κατὰ τὰ ἐνόντα [x];) whereas in addressing his disciples not long after, he commanded them to sell their all, and to give it to the poor: secondly, with that of his apostles, not one of whom urges it as binding on the consciences of his Gentile converts, that they should devote *all* their property to almsgiving, nor more of it than in proportion to their means, and to the demands of their own necessities, and to the just claims of their families and immediate connexions upon themselves.

Thus St. Paul; " Communicating unto the neces- " sities of the saints;" Rom. xii. 13: Cf. xii. 8. xv. 26, 27—" Every first *day* of *the* week let each " of you lay (*somewhat*) by himself, storing up " whatsoever he may have been prospered *to store:*" 1 Cor. xvi. 2—" But *as to* this thing—he who " soweth sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and

[u] 1 Tim. v. 8.

[x] Luke xi. 41. Harm. P. iv. 31. Suidas, *ἐνόν. δυνατόν. ἢ ἐνυπάρχον.* In which sense, the term is of very frequent occurrence, sometimes absolutely in the accusative, as in this passage of St. Luke, at others in construction, as *ἐκ τῶν ἐνόντων*, or the like. See Dionys. Hal. Ant. Rom. i. 46. 47—Jos. B. Jud. vi. iii. 1: Contra Apion. ii. 16. p. 1260: Ibid. 27—Epictet. Manuale, xxxiii. 5—Dio Chrys. Orat. xiv. 444. 35: Orat. xv. 450. 5—Aristides, Orat. xiii. 319. l. 17: xiv. 349. l. 1—Heliodor. Æthiopica, ix. 10—Isocrates, Orat. xi. 46: xv. 343: xvi. 48: Æschines, Orat. ii. 41, &c.

" he who soweth unto blessings, unto blessings also " shall reap. Every one—according as he prefer- " reth with his heart; not of grief, or of necessity: " for a cheerful giver God loveth:" 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7: cf. 8—15—" Only, that we remember the poor:" Gal. ii. 10—" And let him who is being catechised " in the word (receiving the rudiments of the word) " communicate unto the catechiser (to him who is " teaching him) in all good things:" Gal. vi. 6: cf. 9, 13—" He that stealeth, let him steal no more, " but rather let him labour, gaining by the work of " his hands that which is good, that he may have " *wherewithal* to impart to him that hath need:" Ephes. iv. 28: cf. Philipp. iv. 10—20: 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10—" For when we were with you also, this " did we command you, that if any one is not will- " ing to work, neither let him eat:" 2 Thess. iii. 10: cf. 11, 12—" And if any believing man, or believ- " ing woman, hath widows, let him assist them, " and let not the church (congregation) be burden- " ed, that it may assist those that are widows in- " deed:" 1 Tim. v. 16—" Them that are rich in the " word that now is, command . . . . to do good, to " be rich in honest works, to be easy of imparting, " apt to communicate," &c. Ibid. vi. 17, 18.

It is needless to observe, how much perplexity the positive contradiction between the express tenor of such precepts as these, and the apparent meaning of those which we have considered above, would occasion us; were we to endeavour to reconcile them together, on the supposition that all were intended to be binding on Christians alike. It would be an invidious undertaking, too, however easy it might be, to shew what violence, subterfuge, exaggeration

or distortion of the plain meaning of words, commentators at different times have actually had recourse to, for the purpose of such a reconciliation. The cause of all this difficulty has been, the want of attention to this material distinction; that what our Saviour himself delivered of the rule of duty was primarily designed for Hebrew Christians, and might be restricted in its obligation, and temporary in its observance; but what the apostles delivered of the same, was intended for the direction of Gentile converts, and must be as universal in its application as perpetual in its duration. Nor is it any objection that some perhaps of the arguments, which are found to be employed to enforce the conviction of a truth especially designed for Hebrew Christians, may seem to prove it of Christians or believers in general. Without the assurance of Christ, who so uses them, they would not prove it even of the former; much less without his authority, ought they to be borrowed and transferred, as capable of proving it, or as meant to prove it, of the latter [y].

[y] If the account which has thus been given of the state of things in the original or mother church of Jerusalem, for the interval between the ascension and the Jewish war, is correct; it is evident that the language of the Lord's Prayer, which he himself taught his disciples, and which no doubt formed a constant part of their daily devotions, would be strictly applicable to it; more particularly in the petition, Give us this day our daily bread; explained as I endeavoured to shew it ought to be, in my former work: see the note to Diss. viii. part 3. vol. ii. p. 283.

It appears to me, too, that the sacrifice of temporal possessions, as a preliminary step to becoming members of the first Christian society, was most probably the thing which our Saviour intended, when he pronounced it to be more difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, (which surely

must mean to become a convert to Christianity,) than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. See Matt. xix. 23—26: Mark x. 23—27: Luke xviii. 24—27. Harm. P. iv. 53. The context of the discourse in reference to that subject, both before and after, both in what had previously passed between our Saviour and the rich young ruler, and what subsequently passed between him and Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles; sufficiently proves that the foundation of this particular difficulty with respect to the rich, was the reluctance which they would feel to make the sacrifice of their wealth, when that sacrifice should be necessary in order to become Christians. But it would not be easy to shew that any such sacrifice was actually required of the rich, in order to their becoming members of the church, unless it was to their becoming members of the first or the Hebrew church.

St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 3, specifies the giving of *all* his *goods* or *possessions* to feed the poor, (such being the meaning of the word ψωμίσαι, which properly denotes *to feed with sops*,) as the highest instance of self-denial which a Christian could exhibit; to be paralleled only by an act of equal self-devotion, the giving of his body to be burned. If so, the one of these must be considered as extraordinary an effort of religious duty as the other: and unless it should be maintained that to give their bodies to be burned was a part of the ordinary duty of Christians, neither can it be contended that to devote their possessions exclusively to charity was so.

The history of the Gentile philosophers supplied examples of persons who had manifested a noble contempt of wealth, and by one act of self-denial had rid themselves for ever of its fetters: such as Democritus, Diogenes, Crates, &c. See Origen. iii. 672. C. D. Comm. in Matt. tom. xv. 15. Cf. Apuleius, De Magia Oratio, p. 26, and Florida, p. 127, 128. Eusebius allows the truth of these facts. But while he contends that such instances were rare among the Gentiles, the Gospel he says, could boast of abundance of examples to the same effect: Dem. Evang. iii. 6. 129. B. D. Admitting the truth of this statement also, still we may contend that such cases of the resignation of temporal possessions, from whatever motive and for whatever purpose, were just as extraordinary instances of self-denial among Christians, as the former, among the Gentiles. The only

difference between them was, that the one were comparatively much more numerous than the other. It is probable that Eusebius means persons who voluntarily embraced the monastic or ascetic life, among Christians; in order to which, the first thing they did was to part with their worldly possessions—and to retire afterwards into cloisters or hermitages. No doubt multitudes had embraced this life before the time of Eusebius, and therefore had made the sacrifice in question—as multitudes continued to embrace it, and to make similar sacrifices, after his time also. But as every Christian did not think it his duty to bid adieu to the world by becoming a monk, so neither did he, to part with his temporal possessions.

Julian, among his other charges against the Galilæans, that is, the Christians, reproaches such as he calls ἀποτακτισταὶ (that is, οἵτινες ἀπετάξαντο, had renounced, bade adieu to, or parted with their temporal possessions, to embrace a voluntary poverty) with doing even this from interested motives, and in the hope of gaining, in divers ways, from the admiration and generosity of the rest of the Christians, more than an equivalent for what they had lost, or seemed to have lost: Oratio vii. 224. A. B.

Lucian, in like manner, iii. 336, sqq. De Morte Peregrini, cap. 13, tells us, that among the other tricks of this juggler and impostor, one was to impose on the charity and liberality of the Christians, whose sect he had pretended to join, by an affectation of poverty and self-denial. By this means he reaped an abundant harvest from the simplicity of the Christians of Asia and of Palestine.

The same passage of Lucian bears ample testimony to the readiness of the Christians to communicate to one another the benefit of each other's means; to their having been taught by their founder to consider each other as brethren, and to treat one another accordingly; to their sparing neither personal pains, nor private expense, to help and relieve fellow-Christians in distress, without reference to place or country: but it says not a word of their having all things common; nothing that each member of the church could call his own; or of any one's being expected in his time, to give up his personal property to be admitted into the society of the Christians: not even in Palestine itself.

Where Justin Martyr is speaking of the ceremonies of Christian worship in his time, (which was the first half of the second

century,) more particularly those of the celebration of the Eucharist; he particularly mentions, as the concluding part of the solemnity, the contributions of the richer and more independent members, for the relief of the necessities of the poorer and more needy. But he plainly describes this as a voluntary thing; though a very stated and regular part of the ceremony. See Apolog. i. 97. 15.

Lactantius also (A. D. 303.) when exhorting the rich to the duty of charity, observes, Neque nunc suaderi tibi putes, ut rem familiarem tuam minuas vel exhaurias; sed quæ in supervacua fueras impensurus, ad meliora convertas: Div. Institt. vi. 12. p. 547.

It seems to me that the promise of an extraordinary support, and the consequent requisition to part with their own possessions for eleemosynary purposes, were always understood to be so exclusively confined to the Hebrew Christians as such; that the latter was not considered binding even on the Jews of the dispersion, who might have become members of the church of Jerusalem; as no doubt multitudes of them did, while the limits of the church were still confined to the precincts of that city. This is the reason of that particular commendation implicitly pronounced on the conduct of Barnabas: who though a Jew of the dispersion, and a native of Cyprus, yet sold his possessions there, and laid the money at the apostles' feet. His disinterestedness and zeal in the cause of the religion he had embraced, and his desire to comply with its practical duties, led him to do more than in strictness he was required to do; and than other Jews, belonging like him to the same dispersion, thought it their duty to do. It is the reason also, as I apprehend, of that murmuring on the part of the Hellenists (which means Jews of the dispersion) against the Hebrews, (that is, the Jews of the mother country; both, of course, at the time equally Christians, and equally members of the church of Jerusalem,) which gave occasion to the ordination of deacons: Acts vi. 1. The ground of this complaint was not that they themselves were neglected (or rather, were beginning to be neglected) in the daily ministration; but their widows—(*αἱ χῆραι αὐτῶν*)—widows, like themselves, of the same dispersion, though members also of the church. The practice of providing for that description of helpless or destitute persons, who are

called widows, (that is, poor women, whose husbands were dead, and who had either no children, or none who were capable of maintaining them,) is noticed here as a practice already in existence, for the first time: but in my opinion, is as old as the formation of the first Christian society itself. Now this practice, which had its origin in the very genius of the Christian religion, was not confined to the first Christian society, nor to any single one; but was introduced wherever the church was established, and among the Gentiles as well as the Jews. There needs no proof of this assertion; the truth of which must be familiar to every one who has read the Acts, or the Epistles, with any the least attention. And ecclesiastical history bears ample testimony to the continuance of this kind of provision for the poor, once begun, down to the remotest times. I apprehend then that the maintenance of poor Hellenistic widows, even in the church of Jerusalem, out of the common funds of the church, would be matter of course; if any such belonged to the society of Christians there. The mode of their maintenance too would be like that of the support of any others; viz. the ministration daily made to all; the distribution which took place every day, out of the common property for the supply of the wants of all. Whether any Hellenist members of the church besides their poor widows, partook of this daily ministration also, is another question; which I do not think we possess the means of deciding in the affirmative. Certain only it is, that at the time when deacons first came to be appointed, (seven years or nearly, from the first day of Pentecost, when we may presume the members of the church in Jerusalem had been greatly multiplied, and the task of furnishing the daily supply to the wants of all had been increased in proportion,) we do not find the Hellenists complaining that they themselves, but only that their widows, began to be neglected.

It must have occurred to those who have studied the language of the Epistles with attention, that the phrase οἱ πτωχοὶ is used there in a peculiar manner, for a single class of the poor; viz. the members of the church of Judæa. See Gal. ii. 10: Rom. xv. 26, &c. Why should these in particular be called the poor; when the poor, no doubt, were to be met with every where? I can imagine no reason for this denomination of them more especially, so probable, as that the members of that church in

particular consisted mainly, if not exclusively, of persons, who, by becoming members of it, had parted with their possessions, and reduced themselves to a voluntary poverty. Under such circumstances, the proportion of poor, strictly so called, would be greater in that church, than among any other society of Christians.

The history of Christianity, so far as it is contained in the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, supplies only two instances of a general contribution for eleemosynary purposes; one U. C. 795. A. D. 42, the other U. C. 807—809. A. D. 54—56. It is a remarkable circumstance that both these were voluntary contributions, made by the members of the Gentile churches; and both were intended for the benefit of the members of the mother church at Jerusalem. It is also remarkable that they were contributions expressly made and provided for the relief of the Hebrew Christians, against times and seasons which are otherwise ascertained to have been seasons of dearth and scarcity. For the necessary information on these points, I refer the reader to Diss. xiii. of vol. i. and Diss. i. of vol. ii. of my former work.

The same characteristic circumstance of a voluntary poverty, as the distinguishing peculiarity of the situation of the members of the parent church, between the day of Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem, I should think would be a much more natural solution of the name of Ebionites, (*οἱ πτωχοὶ*,) retained by a sect or division of *these* Christians, after their return to Jerusalem, when the war was over, than the explanation of the name, assigned by Eusebius, E. H. iii. xxvii. 99. D—the meanness, and as it were *poverty* of their opinions, respecting the dignity of our Saviour's nature: *ταύτῃ γὰρ ἐπίκλην*, (sc. Ebion,) says he, *ὁ πτωχὸς παρ' Ἑβραίοις ὀνομάζεται.*

When I observed, that the original constitution of the Hebrew church, by which it was founded on the basis of a community of property among its members, was something unexampled in any other society, before or afterwards; I was not ignorant that there were two societies in existence at this very time, which in this one circumstance resembled the Christian society at Jerusalem—that of the Essenes in Palestine, and that of the Therapeutæ in Egypt. But these societies differed so widely in other respects from the Christian, that notwithstanding their agree-

ment in this one peculiarity, they do not admit of being compared with it, any more than an association of monks or cœnobites, with the social union of a body of citizens, or the component parts of a nation.

Of the Essenes, in his time, Philo Judæus has given an account, Quod liber quisquis virtuti studet, ii. 457. 2—459. 41; which Eusebius quotes at great length, Evangelica Præparatio, viii. 12. 381. sqq. The latter gives another account of the same sect, also, viii. 11. 379 seqq. which he professes to have taken from a part of Philo's ὑπὲρ Ἰουδαίων ἀπολογία; which is lost. Josephus too gives a minute account of them, Bell. Jud. ii. viii. 2—13: Ant. Jud. xviii. i. 5. Porphyry borrowed this account; as Eusebius has quoted it again from Porphyry, Evang. Præp. ix. 3. 404. sqq.

The Therapeutæ are described by Philo, at great length, De Vita Contemplativa, ii. 471. 1—486. 12: the substance of whose account is repeated by Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. ii. 17.

The particulars of the descriptions given of the principles of both these sects, their mode of life, and the various characteristic peculiarities of each, would suit in some respects to the account which is found in the Acts, of the constitution of the Hebrew church: which was most probably the reason why Eusebius was led to conclude that the Egyptian Therapeutæ were neither more nor less than Christians, planted by St. Mark in Egypt. But Philo describes this sect of his countrymen; and in the time of Philo, so far as we can trace the particulars of his life, or fix the chronology of his various treatises, it would be difficult to prove that Christianity was yet introduced into Egypt—particularly by the ministry of St. Mark; whose coming there, as I shewed in my former work, was later than the second of Nero. Besides, the principles and habits of the Therapeutæ were not such as a primitive and genuine Christianity could ever have recognized for her own. It was their custom to renounce the world; to bid adieu to social intercourse and social duties: to fly from the cities, and to take up their abode in the solitudes of the deserts, which surrounded Egypt on all sides: a custom repugnant to the true genius and the native tendencies of the Christian religion, at all times, and to its effects at its first establishment, among its original professors. The only connexion which the Egyptian Therapeutæ can claim with

Christianity, is perhaps this; that they might be the prototypes of those *monachi*, and *eremitæ* or *anachoretæ*, of later Christian times; who first appeared, and who always abounded most, in Egypt.

The truth is, the Therapeutæ were either a subdivision of the Essenes of Palestine, or a rival sect, with another denomination, established in Egypt. It is clear from Philo's account, that the former were Jews as much as the latter, and consequently no more Christians than they. The circumstance, that a candidate for admission into either of these sects parted, first of all, with his temporal possessions, was common to both: but there was this difference between them, as to the way in which it was done, that the Therapeutæ resigned their property to such as would have had a legitimate claim to it, if they themselves had been dead; that is, to their nearest friends and relations: but the Essenes gave up theirs to the use of their whole society. So far then, the practice of the Essenes agreed more closely with the rule of proceeding established in the Hebrew church.

The numbers of the Essenes, Philo reckons about 4000: so that they were even less numerous than the Pharisees, whom Josephus reckons at 6000. They are not once mentioned in the Gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles; probably because of their living in the desert, apart from all intercourse with any but their own sect. As inhabitants of the desert of Arabia, contiguous to Judæa, Pliny the elder also alludes to them, under the name of Essæi. The occasion of the Jewish war drew them forth from their retirement, to embrace the party of the zealots; and Josephus mentions various instances of their indomitable spirit, and unshaken firmness in enduring any degree of bodily torture which the Romans could inflict upon them. Out of the fund formed by the joint property of the whole society, each individual member was supported. They had one board; one dwelling; in short, every thing common, except their wives and children; and like the freemasons, or the members of certain other associations of subsequent times, wherever they came, they could claim, and were sure to receive, support from the rest of their fraternity.

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, MORAL, AND INTERPRETATION.

The second subdivision of the third part of the discourse, we assumed to begin at verse 35. That we must regard this subdivision as an integral member of the whole paragraph, is evident; there being no reason to suppose that our Lord's address to his disciples, once resumed, was not continued without interruption down to verse 40. That there is a change of topics, however, from the thirty-fifth verse and downwards, as compared with the substance of what goes before, is equally apparent. The connexion between the parts of a discourse, which though consecutively delivered are yet devoted to subjects so widely different, it may not be easy to point out; nor as I elsewhere observed, in considering the topics of our Saviour's discourses is it of necessary importance to the understanding of them, that it should be pointed out.

If however, we may advance a conjecture, the order and transition of thought from the subject of the first subdivision to that of the second in the present instance, may probably be accounted for, on the principles of association, as follows. The former part was directed to the eviction of a principle of duty, very difficult indeed of application as the rule of conduct in practice, and adverse to the tendencies of human nature; requiring consequently to be enforced and animated by the prospect of a proportionable reward. Now the mention of such a reward might suggest the time when it would be conferred; the time, the return of Christ to judgment; that return, its unexpectedness; and its un-

expectedness, the situation in which it would surprise the Christian world. Hence, the propriety and expediency of subjoining such precepts and maxims, for the regulation of conduct meanwhile, as were adapted both to the fact of the future return of Christ, which was matter of certainty, and to the time or season of the return, which was matter of uncertainty; the precepts of Christian vigilance, Christian readiness, Christian preparation. Such precepts as these are the natural practical consequences of the doctrine in question; and understood according to their true meaning, and their legitimate extent, they are the only duties which can be inculcated upon every Christian's observance, who entertains a personal assurance of the futurity of such a thing as the return of his Lord and Master, some time or other, and feels that he has a personal interest in the consequences of that return, along with the rest of his servants.

There is no reason to suppose that our Lord's discourse, as it was continued without interruption past the 35th verse, so was not, as naturally, brought to a close at the 40th. The question of Peter, recorded at the 41st verse, proves this: for we cannot imagine he would have ventured to interrupt his Master, before he had made an end of speaking, to ask him either that, or any other question; though he might naturally take advantage of a pause on his part, whether for a longer or a shorter time, if it gave him an opportunity of putting a question without a breach of respect. So far, then, the substance of verses 35—40 may be considered independent of what follows from verses 41—48—or what we stated at the outset of this exposition, to be the conclusion

of that portion of the whole discourse, which we proposed to consider.

Still as the question of Peter, verse 41, was produced by what had just preceded, and as the answer to that question gave occasion to the rest of the discourse, down to verse 48, and as there is great similarity in the subject-matter both of the preceding and the subsequent parts respectively; we shall be justified in classing them together, and treating of them conjointly. The propositions, which I consider to be necessary to their explanation as one whole, and which admit of being established respecting both in common, or either in particular, are these three.

First, they carry on, both together, an entire parabolic or allegorical description, intended for similar purposes, and conveying the same moral in general, in each instance.

Secondly, the first part of the description is to be understood of Christians in general, regarded in their proper relation to Christ; and the second, of the ministers of religion in particular, regarded in their's.

Thirdly, both parts describe an œconomy of probation, preparatory to, and followed by, an œconomy of retribution; the one in reference to Christians in general, the other to the ministers of religion in particular.

With respect to the first of these propositions; that the substance of verses 35—40 was conceived by Peter to contain a parable of some kind or other, appears from his very words; "Lord, speakest thou "this parable with reference to us, or even with "reference to all?" We are justified, therefore, in

considering it though not a parable strictly so called, that is, not consisting of a parabolic history of any kind, yet to be parabolic or allegorical in general.

This being the case, the substance of what follows from verse 41—48, on the principle of analogy must be regarded as parabolic also. There is no doubt that as Peter called the former part a parable, so, had it been necessary, he would have called the latter a parable, likewise. It arose out of the former; and is in fact only a continuation of the train of thought begun and carried on, in that. For we may observe, that as there was a distinction of persons—one principal, the rest subordinate—in the former, so there is in this: as the relation of these persons in the former was the relation of a master and his servants, so it is in this: as the principal personage was supposed to be absent from home, but expected some time to return, in the former, so he is in this: as the subordinate personages were supposed to be waiting, or at least were required to be waiting, for his return in the former, so are they in this: as something was promised in the way of reward for the observance of the duty of watchfulness on the part of the servants, against the return of the master, in the former, so is it in this: as the coming of the master, to be followed by such and such personal consequences to the servants, was sudden and unexpected in the former, so it is in this: as the principal personage, or the master, requires to be understood of Christ himself in the former, so does he in this; and as the subordinate persons, represented as his servants, must be supposed to denote Christians in the former, so must they in this: as the material representation is made the founda-

tion of proper moral or practical inferences in the former, so is it in this: and as the grounds or data of these inferences are akin to each other in both, so are the conclusions deduced from them also, akin to each other in both.

In fact, the terms of both these paragraphs throughout, and especially of the second, applied to whom they may, and understood of what they may, are so clearly metaphorical, that to suppose them capable of a literal construction would be the height of absurdity. If so, they must be figuratively understood; and taken together they constitute an allegory, uniform and consistent in its character as considered by itself, which we are justified in classing with the rest of the parables of the same kind, and treating of as such. This may suffice for the proof of the first of our propositions.

With regard to the second; I must refer the reader in the first place to what was premised in the eighth chapter of the General Introduction, concerning the distinction of the component parts or members of the visible church, and the figurative or parabolic mode of denominating each of them respectively. I shall observe at present only, in addition to what was there said, that the apostles of our Lord, and such as were afterwards ordained by them to ministerial offices, as such, in the church—but such alone—may fitly be understood to denote the ministers of religion, in contradistinction to the people; and the rest of their fellow-disciples (which, as referred to the present period, or to the period immediately following the first promulgation of Christianity, would be the rest of the Hebrew Christians) may just as properly represent the peo-

ple or laity, in contradistinction to the ministers of religion: which being granted, I think it may next be shewn, by the aid of the descriptions themselves, that the subordinate personages immediately concerned in the first part of the allegory, its material representation, its scope and application, are Christians in general; and those, who are similarly concerned in the second part of it, are the ministers of religion in particular.

For first; the question of Peter was expressly designed to obtain the solution of this very difficulty, who were the parties more immediately concerned in the drift and reference of the allegory, which had just been delivered. The words of his question admit of being rendered, Speakest thou this parable *with reference to* us, or even *with reference to* all, just as much as, Speakest thou this parable *unto* us, or even *unto* all. In this case, supposing the words of the recent discourse not merely to have been addressed to such and such persons, but to have had a special reference to them, there were but two applications of which, in the judgment of Peter, it was capable; viz. either to his own case and that of others whom he classes with himself, as to a certain number distinct from the rest; or to the case of *all*, as including the rest, besides himself and those whom he classes with himself. But a question may still be raised, whether by *all*, even in this case, he understood the rest of the disciples, as distinct from the twelve apostles, or the rest of the people present, as distinct from the disciples; or both.

Of these suppositions, the first is the most probable. For Peter could not be ignorant that Jesus had both begun this present discourse by addressing

himself exclusively to his disciples, and had continued it as confined unto them, until he was interrupted by the request from the multitude standing by: and though, in consequence of that interruption, his discourse for a time had necessarily been directed to the people generally, yet he knew that the original address to the disciples had been resumed, and the discourse again confined to them as before. He was aware, then, that what had been last spoken, had been spoken to the disciples, and therefore must have been meant for the disciples; which renders it very unlikely that he would immediately ask whether it was designed for the multitude distinct from them, or for either as much as for the other. But admitting that what our Lord had just said, was intended for his own disciples in particular, and not for the people in general, there might still be reason sufficient to induce any one of the apostles to inquire further, whether all the disciples indiscriminately, or the twelve apostles exclusively, were most properly concerned in it.

It cannot be necessary to prove, that though the twelve apostles themselves, before the time of their ordination, might have ranked only as disciples or simple believers in our Lord, in common with the rest of his followers; yet since that ordination, which took place at the beginning of the second year of his ministry, they had constituted a distinct class of the disciples; and seemed to have been invested with a peculiar dignity, or set apart for the reception and enjoyment of peculiar privileges hereafter, in having been personally selected by their common Master from the body of his followers, to be always with him—to be admitted to his privacy

—to approach his person—to hear his confidential discourses—to share his power of working miracles to a certain extent—and even to be associated with him, as partners in his proper office and ministry, by being sent out in his lifetime to preach in his stead.

Now it would be very inconsistent with the experienced tendencies of human nature, under such circumstances, to suppose that the elevation of twelve disciples in particular to a name and rank peculiar to themselves, would not be likely *a priori* to raise in their minds a presumption of their own superiority, real or imaginary, to the rest of their fellow-disciples: that they were a distinct body, and had a right to consider themselves independent of the rest. There are facts in the gospel history, which prove that even among the apostles themselves, certain distinctions which Jesus was supposed to have made in favour of some above the rest, had the effect of exciting unwarrantable expectations in those seemingly favoured individuals, to the prejudice of the rest; and unfounded jealousies of them in their fellow-apostles: and we have already had occasion to consider an instance when this mutual spirit of rivalry, breaking out into mutual disputes and struggles for precedency, while our Lord was still present with his apostles, laid him under the necessity of repressing it by the strongest language and the most significant actions. On this subject, however, the reader may refer to Diss. xiv. vol. ii. p. 414. of my former work.

The true cause of this unamiable feeling towards each other, was, of course, that ignorance of the real nature of their Master's kingdom, under which the

twelve laboured, during the whole period of his personal ministry, in common with the rest of the disciples and the body of the nation; a cause and an effect first removed only on the day of Pentecost, when the same influx of the Spirit of grace and truth, both communicated to their understandings new and juster notions of the Christian mission, and warmed their hearts with fervent charity towards each other, and all mankind. From the fact of this prejudice, however, while it lasted, and its natural consequences on the minds of those who were actuated by it, we may infer, that if each of the apostles was disposed to envy and be jealous of another in particular, they would all concur in looking on the rest of the disciples in general, with the same exclusive idea of their comparative inferiority both in point of present personal estimation with their common Master, and in the chance or expectation of future personal benefit from the arrival of that common kingdom, which they all anticipated. A promise or assurance of Jesus, which might seem to hold out to any of his followers the prospect of personal advancement, they would be ready to consider as belonging of right in the first place to their own body, and only secondarily to the rest of their fellow-disciples.

Now the concluding words of our Lord's last address to his hearers did certainly convey, however obscurely and indefinitely, an assurance and prospect of some such personal advancement. They spoke of his *coming*; which could scarcely fail to be understood of his coming in his kingdom, especially by those who had heard, in the course of this very year, a specific prediction of his being to

come in his kingdom, and who had seen the fulfilment of that prediction anticipated and confirmed so soon afterwards, by the glorious vision of the transfiguration[z]; of whom St. Peter was one. They spoke also of certain consequences to follow upon that coming; and however indeterminate as to particulars, they were yet sufficiently clear in their general drift and import, to shew that something like personal promotion was to be expected at the hands of Christ, by such of his servants as his coming should find prepared for that event, by readiness and watchfulness on their part. This hint would be enough for the ambition of the twelve to work upon. They might naturally be stimulated by it to a further inquiry, viz. in whose behalf this assurance of future distinction was intended; whether that of the disciples generally, to whom the words were apparently addressed, or that of the apostles in particular, to whom the right to any such distinction, *a priori*, they might be induced to think was virtually to be restricted. And though the rest might be equally desirous to put such a question, it need not surprise us that Peter was the person to ask it; either from the natural ardour and forwardness of his temper, or because he was in some sense the spokesman of the rest, and the organ of communication with their common Master, in all such things as concerned the body in general[a].

[z] Harm. P. iv. 9, 10.

[a] The apostles frequently speak of themselves, in the course of the Gospel history, as contradistinguished not only to the people at large, but also to the rest of the disciples. Thus John, alluding to one who had been seen attempting to cast out devils in Jesus' name—*εἴδομέν τινα τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἐκβάλλοντα*

The ultimate cause of the question of Peter may, therefore, have been a jealousy in behalf of the supposed prerogatives of the twelve, above the rest of the disciples, founded on the reasons which I have mentioned. In this case, by the word *us*, he must mean the apostles; and by the word *all*, the rest of the disciples, as opposed to them. It is possible, however, that the immediate cause of it might be somewhat different even from this; viz. the recollection that what Jesus had just been saying on the subject of taking thought, though addressed to the disciples in general, was but a repetition of what he had said

δαιμόνια, ὃς οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡμῖν· καὶ ἐκωλύσαμεν αὐτὸν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡμῖν: Mark ix. 38. Cf. Luke ix. 49. Harm. P. iv. 14. That he means the twelve by *us*, follows from the fact that the power of working miracles of dispossession, as yet, had been communicated only to them. So likewise Peter, in the passage so often referred to, ἰδοὺ, ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα, καὶ ἠκολουθήσαμέν σοι· τί ἄρα ἔσται ἡμῖν; Matt. xix. 27: cf. Mark x. 28: Luke xviii. 28. Harm. P. iv. 53. which also alludes especially to the sacrifice of temporal possessions as made by the twelve.

Our Lord himself too, often speaks of the twelve in such a manner as pointedly to oppose them to the rest of the disciples. Thus, after inquiring into the opinions entertained by the people of the time, concerning himself, as the Son of man, he ended with putting this question to them, But whom say *ye* that I am? as if more desirous to ascertain the soundness and correctness of their opinions on the same subject, than of those of any others: Matt. xvi. 15: Mark viii. 29: Luke ix. 20. Harm. P. iv. 8. After the discourse too, with the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum, in consequence of which many of his disciples withdrew from him, and walked no more with him, we find him asking this pointed question of the twelve, Will *ye* also go away? John vi. 68. Harm. P. iii. 31. Directly after, he observes, Have not I chosen *you* twelve? John vi. 70. ibid. And again, on a later occasion, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, &c. John xv. 16. Harm. P. iv. 90.

on a former occasion in the first sermon from the mount. That sermon was delivered early in the first year of his ministry; and though not before the call of any of the twelve to be disciples, yet before their ordination to be apostles. It was addressed to them, therefore, in common with the rest of the disciples, and to none of our Lord's followers more than to others. So much of that sermon then, as was now repeated, Peter might have reason to conclude was meant for the rest of the disciples, as well as for himself and his fellow apostles. But the remainder of the present discourse, the part which had been most recently delivered, for ought which appears to the contrary, had never been anticipated hitherto. About this part, therefore, an inquiry might reasonably be made, whether it was designed for the same persons as the preceding; that is, whether for the disciples in general, or for the apostles in particular.

If we turn to the xxivth chapter of St. Matthew, which contains an account of part of the prophecy on the mount, the substance of 45—51 will be found to be a repetition almost *verbatim* of part of what was said on this present occasion; viz. the substance of Luke xii. 41—46[b]. That this part

[b] The coincidence between these passages of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospel respectively, is too minute not to deserve to be particularly noticed. We may begin the comparison between them, at Matt. xxiv. 43, and Luke xii. 39, in which there are only the verbal differences of ἐκεῖνο for τοῦτο: φυλακῇ for ὥρᾳ: εἴασε for ἀφῆκεν: οἰκίαν for οἶκον. Every thing else is word for word the same. And even with respect to these discrepancies, slight as they are, the advantage in reference to propriety is in some, on the side of one evangelist, in others,

of St. Matthew's account of the prophecy in question is, strictly speaking, a repetition of thus much of the present discourse, can scarcely admit of dispute; which being the case, it becomes a presumptive argument that the end designed by it as repeated, must have been the same with that which was proposed in its original delivery. We may presume

on that of the other: *ὥρα* is more exact than *φυλακὴ*, *οἶκος* than *οἰκία*; but *εἴασε* than *ἀφῆκε*.

In the 44th of St. Matt. and the 40th of St. Luke, there is no other difference than *διὰ τοῦτο* instead of *οὖν*.

In the 45th of Matt. and the 42nd of Luke, we have no difference but the use of the generic *δοῦλος* for the specific *οἰκονόμος*: the past *κατέστησεν* for the future *καταστήσει*: *αὐτοῦ* after *κύριος* in the former, omitted in the latter: *ἐν καιρῷ* after *τὴν τροφὴν* in the one, before *τὸ σιτομέτριον* in the other: *τροφὴν* in St. Matt. *σιτομέτριον* in St. Luke. With respect to these, we may observe, *δοῦλος* is not so proper as *οἰκονόμος*: nor the future *καταστήσει*, as the prophetic past *κατέστησεν*: nor *τροφὴ* as *σιτομέτριον*.

In the 46th of Matt. and the 43rd of Luke, there is no difference at all; nor in the 47th of Matt. and the 44th of Luke, except in the use of *ἀμὴν* for *ἀληθῶς*, which is in fact no difference at all; *ἀμὴν* in Syro-Hebraic being the same thing as *ἀληθῶς* in Greek: the one proper for a gospel like St. Matthew's, intended for natives of Palestine; the other for one like St. Luke's, written to be read by Gentiles.

In the 48th and 49th of St. Matt. and the 45th of St. Luke, the only differences are the insertion of the epithet *κακὸς* before *δοῦλος* in the former, and its absence in the latter; *ἐλθεῖν* for *ἔρχεσθαι*: the comprehensive terms *τοὺς συνδούλους* instead of the explanatory, *τοὺς παῖδας καὶ τὰς παιδίσκας*, and *μετὰ τῶν μεθυόντων* instead of *καὶ μεθύσκεσθαι*.

Between the 50th of Matt. and the 46th of Luke, down to *ἐν ὥρᾳ ᾗ οὐ γινώσκει*, there is no difference at all; nor between the 51st of Matt. and the rest of the 46th of St. Luke, except in the use of *ὑποκριτῶν* for *ἀπίστων*, and in the supplementary clause, *ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς, καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων*, which ends the paragraph in St. Matthew, but is wanting in St. Luke.

too, that the repetition in a later discourse, of thus much of a former, and that, in terms so very like what had been used before, could not fail to recall to the minds of the hearers what was before said for the first time; and therefore we may suppose was always intended to do so. The time of the two discourses respectively strengthens this inference: the former having been delivered probably not many days, and certainly not many weeks, before the latter. For this length of time, it is nothing extraordinary to suppose that the natural powers of the memory might suffice to keep in mind the particulars of the discourse now delivered, remarkable as it was; or at least, that the repetition of so much of it in terms almost *verbatim* the same, within so short a time, would contribute forcibly to remind the hearers of them.

Now besides St. Matthew's account of the prophecy on the mountain, St. Mark and St. Luke have recorded it likewise; and to reduce these relations to an harmony with each other, was the proper business of that part of my former work, where the prophecy found its place. See my Harm. P. iv. 78. By a reference to that adjustment of them it will appear, that the last sentence of St. Mark's account, xiii. 37, comes in between Matt. xxiv. 44, and 45, &c.; that is, if this arrangement be correct, it appears that between what St. Matthew records as repeated of the first part of the present allegory, and what he records as repeated of the second; (the standard of reference being St. Luke's account of the delivery of them both on the present occasion;) Jesus interposed a declaration to this effect, (ἃ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω πᾶσι λέγω· γρηγορεῖτε:) "Now the things

" which I am speaking to you, I am speaking to all, " Watch."

Compare then with this declaration, the terms of the question put by St. Peter, between the two successive parts of the same allegory, as first delivered; (Κύριε, πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην λέγεις, ἢ καὶ πρὸς πάντας;) " Lord, speakest thou (*or* art thou speaking) " this parable with reference to us, or even with re- " ference to all?" The question takes place in the one exactly at the same point of time, relatively to what precedes and follows, as the declaration in the other. Let it be remembered too, that Peter, who put the question on the former occasion, was one of the four who heard the prophecy, and to whom the declaration was made, on the later. Let it be observed also, that when a direct question was put to our Lord, on the former occasion, to know of whom the allegory just delivered was meant to be understood, he declined to answer it directly then; but on the second, after reverting to the terms of the same allegory again, without any similar question's having been again put to him, he specifies of his own accord, to whom he meant it to apply; and that, in terms which had they been used on the former occasion, would have furnished a direct answer to the question then put. Let it be observed moreover, that whereas he was asked before to whom he meant the *parable* just delivered to apply, he declared on the second occasion, to whom he meant the *practical precept*, (γρηγορεῖτε,) " Watch ye," to apply; which are in fact the same thing: for as the practical precept " to watch," is the moral deducible from the nature and representation of the material circumstances, as supposed in the allegory just pre-

ceding; if that moral inference is applicable *to all*, the allegory must have been intended *for all*.

From these considerations, I think, we may conclude with an high degree of probability, first that the declaration, Now the things which I am speaking to *you*, I am speaking to *all*, Watch, was designedly interposed to meet the question virtually presupposed, because remembered to have been put, under similar circumstances, once before, Art thou speaking with reference to *us*, or even with reference to *all*[c]: secondly, as the precept, Watch ye, arising out of the parable, is the thing said to be meant for *all*, no less than for *them*, (the four apostles, the hearers of our Lord at the time,) the parable which gave occasion to it, must have been meant for *all* as well as for *them*.

If this be the case, two conclusions are immediately deducible, in reference to the question at present under our consideration; first, that by *all* in Peter's interrogation, the rest of the disciples as distinct from the apostles, that is, Christians in general as opposed to the ministers of religion in particular, are to be understood: secondly, that the part of the allegory about which he inquired, (the first part, or so much of it as had already been delivered,) was designed to apply to the case of the disciples, that is, of Christians in general, and not to that of the apostles, or in other words, of the ministers of religion in particular.

It will follow, therefore, that if any thing was

[c] And hence we might infer that as Mark xiii. 37. and Luke xii. 41. record the latter a question, the former its answer—Luke xii. 41. in point of time must have been prior to Mark xiii. 37. See Diss. i. p. 20. vol. i. of my former work.

said on the present occasion, especially applicable to the twelve apostles, (that is, to those who represented the ministers of religion,) it must have occurred after this point of time; if it formed a part of the allegory which our Lord had already conceived and begun to express, it must have been as continued in answer to the question of Peter. The question itself was well calculated to lead to its continuation with that view; even had it not before been intended to prosecute it with such an application. The course and topics of our Saviour's teaching we have repeatedly seen to be determined by the circumstances of the moment. Moreover, when questions are put to him, in the answers returned, it is often observable that he replies not to the words, or to the direct import of the interrogations; but in all probability to the thoughts of the interrogators themselves.

I think he did something of this kind on the present occasion. Being questioned by Peter, in behalf of the twelve, whether a parable just delivered, was to be understood of themselves in particular, or of all the disciples in common, he does not answer yes, or no; but waving that mode of satisfying his doubts, he replies by a second parable, agreeing in some respects with the former, but differing from it in others; and leaves him to draw the inference for himself, in whether of the two he had a greater share of personal interest, than in the other.

The advantage of so replying would be, that besides exercising the understanding of the apostles, to find out the personal application of what was intended for themselves, it would instruct them in what was hereafter to be their proper character

and relation, compared with those of the rest of the disciples; and consequently in what should hereafter be their *proper* duty also, as contradistinguished to that of the rest. The very words, in which our Lord resumes his discourse, in answer to the inquiry, (Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς οἰκονόμος καὶ φρόνιμος;) "Who then is the faithful and wise steward?"—seem to imply thus much. The train of reflections, which appear to be intimated by the use of the inferential particle, (ἄρα, *or* then,) all arising out of the question, as well as designed to answer it, may be stated as follows:

Thou hast asked, Peter, whether I have spoken this parable of thee, and thy fellow-apostles, or of all my disciples. What was there in the parable itself, to make it doubtful to whom it was intended to apply? In what capacity were the persons there represented, whom I spoke of as the servants of some master, with a certain duty to discharge in his behalf? Simply as those, who had to wait for the return of their master from the wedding, that as soon as he should come to the door and knock, they might be ready to open unto him. But if these must be supposed to stand for thee, and the rest of my apostles—*Who then is the faithful* or *trustworthy and wise steward*, whom his lord shall appoint over his servants, to give the allowance of provision in due season?

Lastly, the successive parts of the allegory are so far the same in some respects, yet so far different in others; that though as far as they agree together, each may require to be understood of Christians generally, yet as far as they differ, each must be restricted to a distinct class of Christians

in particular. The subordinate personages in both are described as the servants of some master; who must be the same, (as he is our Saviour Jesus Christ himself,) in each. This common master is represented in each as absent for a time from home, but as expected withal to return; and the proper duty of the servants in each is supposed to be something which arises out of this fact; or to be such as, under the circumstances of the case, servants could render only to a master who was absent, though expected sometime to return. There is moreover in each, the promise of a proper reward for the observance of this duty, and the denunciation, either actually or virtually, of a proper punishment for its neglect. The coming again of the master is described in each as sudden and unexpected; and the consequences of that coming, as personal to all the parties whom it surprises at the time, both in the discrimination of character—as good or bad, as entitled to reward or to punishment respectively—and in the dispensation of the effects, answerably to the claims of a supposed good or ill desert, accordingly.

But here the analogy between them ends. For the subordinate personages in the former parable are supposed to be servants, left in waiting for their master; those in the latter, as one servant or more, left in his stead. The proper duty of the one is consequently to be on the watch for his return; that is, simple vigilance as such: but the proper duty of the other is to fill his place while he is absent, and not merely to wait for his return; that is, it is something much more than simple vigilance. The proper reward supposed to be bestowed on the former is what appears an elevation to the rank of

their master, and so far the exchange of their character and relation of servants, as they were before, for something else very different from them; but that of the latter is a specific promotion to other offices of trust, the same in kind with what they held before, but much greater in dignity and degree than they were. The former, then, is not a reward apportioned to services in kind, but the latter is; that is, the former is not the reward of one office of trust, well discharged, by the commission of another; as the latter is. The proper punishment of the neglect of duty in the former parable is not so much defined and expressed, as left to implication; but in the latter it is plainly specified, and in point of rigour and severity is seen to be tantamount to the reward, promised to the observance of the same duty, in point of indulgence and condescension. Now these are such differences in the particulars of the two representations, as render it impossible, with any consistency, to understand them each of the same description of persons. Both, however, must be understood of Christians. If so, the one must be understood of one class of Christians, and the other of another: that is, the former must be understood of the people, as opposed to the ministers of religion, and the latter of the ministers of religion as distinct from the people. And thus much, for the proof of our second proposition.

The proof of the third requires me to refer in the first place, to the ninth chapter of the General Introduction, which treated of the doctrine of an œconomy of probation as preparatory to an œconomy of retribution; and *vice versa*, of that of an œconomy of retribution as designed to succeed to an œconomy

of probation. I shall further observe upon it, at present, simply, that what was then said in relation to either of these œconomies, had no reference to any existing distinctions among Christians themselves, as the proper subjects of each; but in the application, which we are about to make of it to the representations contained in these two parables, we must suppose it limited, as concerns the first of them, to the people, and as concerns the second, to the ministers of religion.

First then; it appears from both the parables that the master of the household in each is understood to be absent; for he who is spoken of as returning, or as expected to return, must be supposed to be previously absent. The fact of the absence in each is affirmed, or implied, to be present; that is, to be matter of actual experience at the time; but that of the return to be future, or only matter of assurance and presumption beforehand.

Again; as the relation and character of the master of the household in both are equally suitable to Jesus Christ, and those of the subordinate members of it to Christians; so is the cause of the departure of the master, which first takes him away, and the occupation to which his absence is devoted, while it continues, something in both, which accords to the Christian doctrine respecting the final end of the departure of Christ, as the head of the church, into heaven at the ascension, as concerned himself, as well as to the intermediate effect ever since, in the constitution or government of his household, the church, upon earth, which is intended to last until his return.

In the first, he is described to be absent upon oc-

casion of a wedding solemnity; and a wedding solemnity being of all the instances of festivity which social or domestic intercourse can furnish, the most joyous to those who partake in it, whether as the principal or the subordinate parties in such celebrities—it may readily be supposed to stand for an occasion of gladness and festivity, the greatest which can be conceived in general. The master, therefore, according to the representation in the first parable, is absent on an occasion of personal festivity to himself; in the enjoyment of which he continues until his return, and from the enjoyment of which he withdraws himself only by his return. Such a representation is in unison with the design and effect of the ascension of Christ into heaven, at first, and of his continuance there ever since; both being understood of the consequences which thereby resulted to himself. For by the event of his ascension and reception into heaven, we believe him to have entered into what is emphatically termed his *joy;* that is, his ultimate personal exaltation for his previous personal humiliation and self-abasement; his personal reward for all that he personally did and suffered, in the voluntary discharge of his commission upon earth. In the possession of this *joy* he has remained ever since; and must continue to remain, until its fruition experiences a momentary interruption (if indeed it is ever to be interrupted) by his return and reappearance for the judgment [d].

[d] As to the capacity in which the master of the household is supposed to be present at the nuptial solemnity in question; it is evidently that of a guest, not of a bridegroom. But to the purpose designed by the supposition of his being absent on such an occasion, this circumstance is immaterial. He is absent on an

In the second parable the master of the family is certainly supposed to be absent; though the particular reason or occasion of his absence is not specified, as it was before. It is implied, however, to be something which imposes on the head of the household himself, the necessity of being a *long* time personally removed from home; and consequently

occasion of personal joy and pleasure to himself; and that is all which is intended to be here conveyed by the fact of his absence itself.

There are other parables, the material foundation of which is the supposed celebration of a nuptial feast. In these, that solemnity itself is represented as something not yet in the course of enjoyment, or actually going forward, but merely in the course of preparation, and designed to be sometime enjoyed. In these too, the bride is a mystical personage; the true, that is, the spiritual and invisible church: the bridegroom also, denoting the head of the church, our Saviour, in his individual capacity may be a real personage, but in his parabolic or relative character, is as much a mystical one, as the bride. The subordinate persons in these parables, that is the guests invited to partake of the nuptial feast, the companions or attendants of the bride or the bridegroom, in one capacity—(that of guests simply invited)—are the members of the visible church; in another—(that of guests actually admitted)—are those of the invisible. The end of all these parables is to personate under types and figures, the consummation of the union between Christ and his true church; that part of the visible, which is hereafter to become the invisible church: whence it follows, that neither the principal party in such representations, nor the subordinate ones, could be described in any other capacity than that of the bridegroom on the one hand, and that of the guests at his marriage feast on the other; and that the effect or consummation of all—the solemnization of the feast itself, could not be supposed to take place before the end of the world, or of the present and preliminary œconomy of probation, which both precedes, and must usher in the œconomy of retribution, before and in order to the actual consummation of all things.

of making some extraordinary provision for the supply of his place during his absence, with a view to the management of his affairs, the regulation and discipline of his family, the welfare and support, as well as the government of all its members, especially the inferior or dependent ones, for the same period of time. The nature of the provision made for these purposes will appear by and by.

Now as to the fact of a present absence, and a protracted duration thereof, on the part of the head of the household in question, which leads to such consequences both to himself and to his family; it is in unison with the state of the case, in the original departure of Jesus Christ, though the head of the church, into heaven at the ascension, and in the interval of time which has since elapsed, and must still continue to elapse, without his appearing again; an interval, which, if we consider the purpose designed to be answered by it, in beginning and completing that scheme of probation incumbent on the members of the existing visible church, which has since subsisted—could not be intended to be of small duration; and which, though many centuries have passed subsequently to that departure of Christ, and the establishment of his church on earth, is not yet at an end.

The fact also of some extraordinary provision for the government of his household, for the supply of his own relation to his servants, and for the discharge of his personal duties in their behalf, during his absence, applies with no less exactness to what began to be the actual state and constitution of the church, the family of faith on earth, immediately upon the departure of its Head and Master into heaven;

as committed by its proper Lord and Master to the care of a delegated ministry, acting by his appointment, and supplying the want of his personal presence—first of all, in the persons of the apostles, and after them, in those who received the same charge and commission from the apostles, which they had derived from Jesus Christ; and having been thus invested with competent power and authority themselves, to make a similar provision for the government and well-being of the church in after-times, have transmitted the same to a succession of pastors and ministers, in regular order, ever since.

Again, the duration of the absence of the master, under the circumstances of the case, both in the one parable and in the other, constitutes, in respect of the servants, an œconomy of probation; that is, places them, while it lasts, in a state of trial: and the period of his return, under the same circumstances, followed as it is by the dispensation of appropriate rewards or punishments, according to the merits of the case and the personal good or ill desert contracted by the servants, during the time of their trial or probation, which is the period of the absence of their master—constitutes to them an œconomy of retribution [c].

[c] We said so much on this subject in the chapter of the General Introduction before referred to, that it would be an useless waste of the reader's time, to repeat the same remarks here. It is sufficient to remind him, that the master of an household, (constituted as we must suppose every household of antiquity to have been, that is, consisting of a great number and variety of orders and classes of slaves or servants,) being absent, whether for a longer or for a shorter time—the subordinate members of his family are relieved from the restraint produced by his personal presence, and personal cognizance of their

In the former of the two parables, the master is supposed to be absent; but to be absent by himself at a nuptial solemnity, where none of his servants accompany him either as personal attendants on him, or as common guests in the solemnity. The subordinate members of his household, then, are supposed to be *all* left at home, while their common master is abroad; and consequently, so far as the duty of those members is determined by the fact of the present absence, or by the expectation of the future

conduct; and are consequently left to themselves, and to the impulse of the various personal motives, which may incline them either to fulfil their duty to their superior, or to neglect it. The nature of their duty itself is not affected by the absence of their master, being of course the same at one time as at another; but the possible motives to its discharge are very liable to be so. A good and well-disposed servant will be as faithful and industrious in the absence of his master, as in his presence; and will make no difference in his conduct, whether under his eye or removed from his observation: but the ill-disposed, the unfaithful, the indolent, will be strongly tempted to take advantage of the opportunity which the absence of their master apparently furnishes, for the neglect of their proper duties with impunity, and for the indulgence of their own appetites and inclinations; which if they were not kept in check by the constant dread of detection and punishment, would always lead them to that neglect. The absence of a master, then, while it lasts, would under such circumstances, whether intentionally or unintentionally, be a trial of the principles of his servants; of their personal attachment to himself; of their sense of duty, their zeal and fidelity in his behalf; of their industry, and perseverance in the discharge of their several employments: and so far, therefore, would be instrumental to a perfect scheme of œconomy, designed to prove what they were, and by the results of experience or the actual matter of fact, to supply criteria for drawing infallible personal distinctions between their respective characters, with a view to just and appropriate personal distinctions, in their treatment or requital.

return of their common superior, the duty of any *one* part among them is the duty of *all.* Now the duty of servants under such circumstances; of servants whom their master leaves at home, while he goes himself to a nuptial feast abroad; is so far to expect him back, at the proper time, and to be prepared for his return. The duty of all, when placed in the situation of servants who do not accompany their master to a festivity like that of a wedding, as his personal attendants abroad—is to wait for him again at home; to be on the watch for his return; to be ready to receive him whenever he arrives; and each in his proper department, to be prepared for any use to which he may wish, or have occasion, to put their services. The proper virtue, therefore, to which under such circumstances, they will be bound to aspire, may be described, in reference to them all, as the virtue of vigilance or watchfulness; and the vice or fault, opposed to it, to which they may be more especially obnoxious, as the fault of sloth or drowsiness. When left therefore, under such circumstances, by the temporary departure of their master from home—to be found again upon his return so on the watch for that event, being a proof of the desire of the servants to be always useful to their master, and always ready to receive and to execute his commands, whether by night or by day, whether in season or out of season—may be construed by him into an evidence of their personal good disposition, their fidelity, and their attachment to himself: to be discovered in a situation the reverse of that, and consequently implying neither a solicitude for the return of their master again, nor a consciousness of their personal duties towards him at all times, may be with

just as much reason considered a proof of their want of principle, their indifference to his service, and the like: and as the former may perhaps be approved and rewarded, so may the latter with still more justice, be resented and punished, by him accordingly.

Now a nuptial festivity, which in the East was always celebrated in the evening, implies that the return of the master of the household, absent by himself on such an occasion, must take place in the night; and therefore must be expected by the subordinate members of his household, whom he leaves at home, also in the night. But as the beginning of such a solemnity coincided with the first watch of the night; and as the last of the nocturnal watches belongs as properly to the morning as to the night; the period within which his return is circumscribed, is with great propriety supposed to be neither earlier than the second, nor later than the third watch of the night. It might be as early as the second, or as late as the third; and in the possibility of its coinciding with either of these divisions of time, the uncertainty of its exact period consists.

The duty of the servants, then, under such circumstances, and as waiting for such a return, is the duty of those who have to sit up and keep on the watch, during the night strictly so called; and possibly during the latest and stillest part of the night. The performance of this duty, therefore, may fitly be represented as resisting the natural inclination to sleep, under such circumstances; and its neglect, as giving way to that inclination; and the more so, as the night advances, and the temptation to sleep becomes the stronger, and the difficulty of resisting it is rendered the greater.

The article of the duty, therefore, incumbent on the servants themselves, is the simple business of watchfulness; but its final end, even when most strictly and faithfully performed, as designed for the personal honour and proper advantage of their master, is marked by the very attitude and circumstances of preparation, in which they are supposed to be keeping watch. Their loins are ready girded about—a necessary precaution, with a view to expedition and dispatch; that no encumbrance might result from the long and flowing outer vesture of antiquity, in which they who would sleep, or had occasion to sit still, were wont to wrap themselves; but which such as desired to be ready for action and bodily exertion, made it their first business to gather up, and confine by the zone, around their waists. Their lanterns are duly lighted, and supplied with oil for consumption: that the darkness of the night may be no more an obstacle to the immediate discharge of their services about their master's person, than the ordinary encumbrance of their dress. The first effect of these preparations is, that as soon as the master arrives, and knocks at the door for admission, they are ready to open to him without delay; the next, that the servants of his household are all in an attitude to receive, and to execute any of his orders, with the requisite agility and speed. The neglect of the proper duty of the servants, under such circumstances, would be the reverse of this antecedent state of preparation with respect to themselves; and the consequence of it would be the reverse of the facility of that prompt and ready obedience, which servants are bound to render at all times to the will and commands of their masters.

Hence, then, as the arrival of the master must necessarily find the servants prepared in the one way, or unprepared in the other; so it is naturally supposed to discriminate between those whom it finds, according to the discovery—or as they are found—with a view to the treatment which a state of preparation, or the contrary to that, would naturally deserve at his hands; to draw from the situation in which his servants are found at the time, an argument of their general character, as good or bad; to found upon the one an œconomy of reward, and on the other an œconomy of punishment; the former on the score of a personal obligation as conferred upon himself, the latter on that of a personal demerit, by which he is no less directly affected. The fact of the punishment, indeed, is left to implication; but if the fact of the reward is openly stated, that of the punishment, on the principle of analogy, may be assumed for certain also. No proper recompense can be held out, as a motive to the performance of a certain duty, without involving, over and above, the assurance of a proper punishment, as a dissuasive from its nonperformance. "Blessed *shall be* those servants, whom their lord, "being come, shall find waking." If such is the language of the promise, in respect to those who are found doing so and so, it is easy to infer, how contrary to the state of beatitude, how much nearer to a state of malediction, must be the condition of those who are found doing otherwise.

In the second parable, however, the personal consequences to be apprehended from the breach of the requisite duty, are not left to implication; but are even more distinctly declared than the personal con-

sequences to be expected from its observance. The supplement of the omission in this instance, shews what was meant to be understood as implied, though not actually expressed, in the former.

The return of the master, then, with respect to the subordinate personages of the first parable, ushers in the commencement of an œconomy of retribution, founded on the supposition of a personal good or ill desert in them, towards himself, as contracted by their personal conduct in his absence, during a preceding œconomy of probation: the nature of their employment and situation at the moment of his return, being construed into a significant evidence of the mode in which they had all along been employed and situated, before. That all this, as we find it represented in the parable, is figurative, may readily be admitted; that it is capable of applying to an actual matter of fact, in the existing œconomy of probation with respect to Christians—its beginning by the personal departure, its termination with the personal return, of Jesus Christ, its continuance for the interval between these two events—has been already shewn: that the watchfulness, supposed in the parable to be the proper virtue incumbent on the servants, as left behind by their master, is nothing else but the discharge of Christian duty, in its several relations generally, has also been explained. But that the good conduct of Christians, as such, should be considered to impose a personal obligation on Christ himself, or their bad conduct, to confer a personal disobligation, and each to be rewarded or resented by him accordingly; whether we could assign a satisfactory reason for it or not, is at least agreeable to the representations of

scripture; and it may be explained intelligibly to our own notions of fitness and propriety, on the common principle of accommodation, in all such instances, to the language, the feelings, and the behaviour of men. In ordinary cases, the good conduct of his own servants, might be fitly acknowledged by an ordinary master as equivalent to a personal obligation; and their bad conduct might still more properly be resented as an instance of personal disobligation; and Christ himself may deal, or be described as dealing with his proper servants, in the same way that an ordinary master, under similar circumstances, would deal with his. Yet it ought not to be forgotten that the duty of servants even to human masters, is one and the same, whether with or without the prospect of a reward. The breach of this duty may, of itself, involve the ill-desert of a personal disobligation towards their master, and of itself be obnoxious to punishment by him, on the part of the servants; but its observance does not of itself imply the merit of any personal obligation, as conferred thereby on the master, or lay him under any necessity, on the score of gratitude or justice, of personally rewarding it. In the case of the return, proposed to the obedience of Christians, and to be dispensed by Christ as their proper master, to them as his proper servants; however much it may appear to depend mediately, on their own freewill and cooperation, as necessary to render the obedience to which the reward is promised—it ought always to be remembered that it is to be attributed ultimately to nothing but the simple bounty, the gratuitous kindness, of their master himself; who would still have

the same right to *all* their services, whether he chose to reward them, or not.

Yet the first act of the master, which the parable describes as the immediate result of discovering his servants, upon his return, at however unseasonable a time of the night, to be actually in that necessary state of preparation, which is the duty of those who are bound to be always intent on the service of another person—is represented, apparently, with an exquisite condescension to what might naturally be expected, under such circumstances, from the ordinary feelings and conduct of men in general, as the effect of a sudden emotion of *gratitude;* as if the zeal and devotion of the servants thus clearly attested and brought to light, had laid even their master under a sense of obligation, which he was anxious to acknowledge, and to requite immediately. The proof afforded by the state of his family at his return, of the unslumbering vigilance, the indefatigable patience, the unintermitted diligence and activity of his dependents, surprises him, as it were, into an unlooked for mark of respect and distinction, towards them. "Blessed *shall be* those serv-
"ants, whom their lord, being come, shall find
"waking. Verily I say unto you, He will gird
"himself about, and make them sit down to meat,
"and will come forward and minister unto them."

These are certainly not the ordinary acts of a master towards servants; yet they are the acts of one who thinks no condescension on his own part too great, for the desert which he must be supposed desirous to requite, by performing them. They are the result then in the present instance, of no ordinary feeling of personal obligation in the agent; and

of no ordinary conviction of personal merit in the objects of them. But be this as it may—the effect of the condescension, on both the parties, is, that the servants for a time are advanced to the rank of the master, and the master, by his own act, is reduced to the condition of the servants; yet so, that while the greatest possible distinction which he could bestow in his proper capacity, is conferred on them, no ignominy nor degradation results to himself: for being his voluntary act, there is nothing personally dishonourable to himself in submitting to it; while, as a proof of his tender regard for his servants, and of the just estimation in which he holds their services, it is the most creditable to his humanity, his kindness, his condescension, and equity, imaginable[f].

[f] There were a variety of feasts or solemnities among the ancients, of which the circumstance supposed in the parable, viz. that of the servants for the time changing places with their masters, was a characteristic peculiarity. For example; the masters entertained and waited on the servants, at the Saturnalia, among the Romans, and the mistresses, at the Matronalia. See Macrob. Saturn. i. 12.

The Saturnalia were originally celebrated for one day; viz. xiv. Kalend. Januarias: from the time of Julius Cæsar, and Augustus, for three, xvi—xiv. Kal. Jan.: the addition of the Sigillaria, made them four days longer; or seven days in all. See Macrob. Saturn. i. 10. *ad fin.*: and cf. Lucian, iii. 385—417. Saturnalia, Cronosolon, and Epistolæ Saturnales *passim.* Also Hor. Serm. ii. vii. 4, 5—Seneca Epp. xlvii. 12—Plin. Epp. ii. 17, 24—Plut. Sylla, 18—Dio. Cass. lx. 19—Arrian, Epict. i. 25. 127. l. 14—Servius ad Æneid. viii. 319—Porphyrius, de Nympharum antro, cxx. (Cantabrigiæ 1710.) Laurentius, de Mensibus iii. 15.

The Matronalia were celebrated on the first of March.

> Martiis cœlebs quid agam Kalendis,
> Quid velint flores, et acerra turis
> Plena, miraris, positusque carbo in
> Cespite vivo. Hor. Carm. iii. viii. 1.

Now, as the servants of the family constituted previously one body; as they had all one and the

> Martis Romani festæ venere Kalendæ;
> Exoriens nostris hinc fuit annus avis:
> Et vaga nunc certa discurrunt undique pompa,
> Perque vias urbis munera perque domos.
>
> Tibull. iii. i. 1.

> Sulpicia est tibi culta tuis, Mars magne, Kalendis;
> Spectatum e cœlo, si sapis, ipse veni. Ibid. iv. ii. 1.

> Cum sis officiis, Gradive, virilibus aptus;
> Dic mihi, matronæ cur tua festa colunt?
>
> Ovid. Fast. iii. 169.

Cf. Juvenal ix. 52, 53—Servius ad Æneid. viii. 638.

Servius Tullius instituted a festival called Compitalia, in honour of the heroes, in which the slaves were to take part as well as the freemen, without any distinction of rank or privilege. Its time was a little after the Saturnalia; and it continued to be celebrated through all the *Compita*, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' time, as usual; the people propitiating the heroes by the ministry of their servants, exempted, for the time and occasion, from every badge of degradation. Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. iv. 14.

In the Quæstiones Romanæ, Plutarch demands why, on the ides of the month before called Sextilis, but in his time August, all the male and female servants kept holyday? vii. 157. Cf. Ovid. Fast. 783, 784.

> Porrige et ancillæ, qua pœnas luce pependit
> Læsa maritali Gallica veste manus.
>
> Ovid. Ars Amandi, ii. 257.

The nones of July, called the Nonæ Caprotinæ, are here meant, on which day the female slaves celebrated a peculiar festivity of their own. Cf. Macrob. Sat. i. 11.

We are told that it was the practice of the kings of Persia not only to send messes or portions from their own tables to their friends, their captains, their body-guard, and the like, but to keep a constant table open even for their slaves and their dogs. Plutarch. viii. 811. 812. Sympos. vii. 4. Cf. Cyri Disciplin. viii. 11. 4.

Livy, v. xiii. describing the ceremonial of the first Lectisternium, at Rome, U. C. 355. adds, Privatim quoque id sacrum

same duty assigned them, in being required to wait for, and be prepared against, the return of their mas-

celebratum est. tota urbe patentibus januis, promiscuoque usu rerum omnium in propatulo posito, notos ignotosque passim advenas in hospitium ductos ferunt: et cum inimicis quoque benigne ac comiter sermones habitos, jurgiis ac litibus temperatum: vinctis quoque dempta in eos dies vincula: religioni deinde fuisse quibus eam opem Dii tulissent, vinciri.

It appears from Dionysius Halicarn. lib. xii. capp. 9, 10. (of the epitome, as recovered by Maius) that these *vincti* were slaves. He quotes from Piso, (ὁ τιμητικὸς,) ἐν ταῖς ἐνιαυσίοις ἀναγραφαῖς· ὅτι λελυμένων μὲν τῶν θεραπόντων, ὅσους πρότερον ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς εἶχον οἱ δεσποταὶ, κ', τ. λ.

Livy, ii. 21. dates the institution of the Saturnalia at Rome, U. C. 257. But Macrobius, Sat. i. 7. *ad fin.* asserts that they were more ancient than the foundation of the city, Adeo, ut ante Romam in Græcia hoc solemne cœpisse L. Accius in annalibus suis referat, his versibus:

Maxima pars Graium Saturno, et maxime Athenæ
Conficiunt sacra, quæ Cronia esse iterantur ab illis;
Eumque diem celebrant: per agros urbesque fere omnes
Exercent epulis læti: famulosque procurant
Quisque suos: nostrique itidem: et mos traditus illinc
Iste, ut cum dominis famuli epulentur ibidem.

Athenæus, in fact, has a chapter, (xiv. 44,) in which he shews that the custom among the Romans at the Saturnalia, by which the masters changed places with their domestics, and both entertained and waited on them, prevailed in various other communities. In Crete, at the festival of the Hermæa; at Trœzen, on one of the days of a solemnity celebrated in the month Geræstius; at Babylon, during the festival called Sacea, from the 15—19 of Lous, it appears from a variety of authorities that the same or similar ceremonies were observed. In the last mentioned of these instances, the rule of the house was given up entirely for the time, to the servants; one of whom was appointed to the command of it, and dressed in a robe like that of the king.

In the next chapter, he quotes from Bato of Sinope, De Thessalia et Hæmonia, an account of a festival celebrated from ancient times in those regions, called Peloria; resembling in all

ter; as they had all an opportunity in common, of acquiring good desert at his hands by the performance of that duty, and all were liable in common, to incurring the charge of ill desert in the same respect, by neglecting it; so are they all with equal consistency supposed to partake in the same kind of exaltation to the rank of their master; and therefore, if that exaltation constitutes the proper reward of the faithful discharge of their duty previously, they are all supposed to partake in that reward alike at last. The reward which is proposed in scripture to Christians generally is a reward in common also: and as the specific character of the reward in the parable was the promotion of the servants for the time to the rank of their master, so is the specific character of that which is promised to Christian obedience, an elevation of the servants of Jesus Christ to a share of the kingdom of their Master: as all the servants were promoted alike to the rank of the master, in the parable, so are all faithful Christians alike promised admission into the kingdom of their Master: and as all the servants, upon the return of the master, by being made to sit down at meat, while he waited upon them, were so far admitted to

respects the Saturnalia and Lectisternia among the Romans: open house being kept for all comers; the prisoners set at liberty; and the servants waited on by their masters.

He records also, iv. 31, from Theopompus, lib. 46, that it was usual at entertainments in Arcadia, for masters and servants to be treated alike; one table, one sort of fare, one kind of wine, being provided for all.

He mentions likewise, vi. 84, from Ephorus, that at Cydonia in Crete, the Claroti (that is the slaves) had the privilege of celebrating a festival, during which no freeman was at liberty to enter the city, and the slaves might even flog the free.

the enjoyment of the same kind of festivity from which he himself was returning, so are all Christians, by being received into the kingdom, admitted into the joy, of Christ; and in the fruition of that joy taste in their due proportion, and to its just degree, of the same kind of beatitude, upon the perception of which to its utmost extent, he himself entered when he departed to heaven and sate down on the right hand of God. And as all this is applicable to the case of Christians in general, so shall we see reason to believe, it applies to them as contradistinguished to the ministers of religion in particular. The reward which is promised to these last may be the same in general as that which is proposed to the obedience of Christians in common; but it may still be something different from it in particular. But to proceed.

The cause of the departure of the master, in the second parable, being something which imposes on the head of the family the necessity of a protracted absence from home, and therefore requires an extraordinary provision for the supply of his place and the government of his household, until his return; the person pitched upon for these purposes, though of course a subordinate member of his family like all the rest, is still naturally described as that sort of servant, who is known by the name of steward or (οἰκονόμος). The existence of such an officer in the families of antiquity, consisting as they did almost entirely of slaves, was indispensably necessary for the sake of the inferior or subordinate members of the household generally. The person, who held this office, in importance and authority was next to the master himself; and therefore he would be the best

qualified by personal fitness, among the dependents of the same master, and the most likely on every account to be selected, in order to become his deputy during his absence, and to fill his place until his return[g].

In families which were large and numerous, there might be many stewards of this description; each required for a separate department of the household, or appointed to preside over a determinate portion of the whole body of servants. Nor does the use of the singular number in speaking of this officer militate against such a supposition: for that use of the word may denote not merely one individual person, among a number of other individuals, but one individual class, among many orders or classes of individuals in general.

Regard being had to the etymon of the name, as the office of this servant was chiefly that of house-steward or domestic manager, it would be part of his business to lay in and distribute the stores of provision, requisite for the maintenance of his master's household—as well as to supply their necessities in every other way; the amount of which provision and supply for the wants of a family, that might consist of many hundreds, and even many thousands of inferior members, could not be inconsiderable. The powers committed to such an officer, then, must have included either the entire or the partial disposal of his master's property, out of which the

[g] I reserve the necessary account of the nature and duties of the office of οἰκονόμος or domestic steward, for the explanation of the parable of the unjust steward. At present, the reader will be pleased to take for granted, what is assumed concerning them in the text.

daily expenses of the household were to be defrayed; while the final end designed by the commission of such powers to him, or the use to which they were expected to be put in his hands, was much more for the sake of the subordinate members, than for that of the head of the household himself. In return for the appropriation of their whole time, their talents, their persons and services, to the benefit of their superior, without the reserve or application of any part, independently of his permission, in their own behalf; the subordinate members of the family were obliged to look to their master for that maintenance which was necessary to their existence, but which, by the dependency of their situation, they were debarred from providing for themselves. It was furnished them, therefore, at the master's expense, out of his property and through the medium of his stewards; the nature of whose duties and the end of whose appointment, as embracing every thing necessary to the support of the inferior members of a family, which they would have a right to expect from their superior, are summarily expressed by the parable in the words, "Who then is the faithful and "wise steward, whom his lord shall appoint over "his servants, to give the allowance of provision," or as St. Matthew expresses it, "to give them their "subsistence—in due season?" It was, in fact, dispensed to them in the shape of a monthly or daily allowance, either of corn, or money, or both. And though such an allowance only is here mentioned as that which was necessary for the purpose of food or nourishment, it is equally true that masters were bound to supply the wants of their slaves of every

other kind; as clothing, lodging, &c.; and actually did supply them.

Now, as the necessity of a constant maintenance for the subordinate members of the household would be just the same, whether the master of it himself were present or absent; so the need of such an officer as his steward, and the exercise of such proper duties as those of his office, in providing for the daily wants of all parts of the household, would be the same, whether the master were present or absent also. The departure of the master from home, then, could make no change in the character and relation of the steward, in these respects; but it is possible it might affect him in other respects. The departure of the master from home might invest his steward with a personal character, and place him in an official relation to the rest of the family, which he could not have sustained before; viz. that of the deputy or *locum tenens* of the master himself; intrusted, consequently, not only with the discharge and management of his ordinary official trust as a steward, and for the same purpose as before, but with the personal prerogatives, the duties, and responsibility of a master, as the head and superior of all the same household in common. Such a further enlargement of his powers is more than even the steward himself, under the immediate superintendence of his master, could be supposed to have confided to him; but not more than on the departure of a master, and during his absence from home, it would be necessary to intrust to some one, and so natural to intrust to none as to the *steward;* an officer of confidence to a certain extent already, and by

virtue of his situation previously possessed of a certain rank and authority, in the household, next only to those of its master. Order and good government are essential to the peace and well-being of all communities, whether under the eye of their natural superiors, or removed from their personal cognizance and observation. No wise or considerate master, then, when contemplating such an event as his personal absence from home, would think of leaving his family, constituted as we must suppose an ancient household to have been, not only without the ordinary provision for the maintenance and support of its members, as usual, but also the extraordinary one, for the means of supplying his own place, and fulfilling his personal duties; by appointing a deputy, armed with the requisite powers to discharge the part of a general superintendent; controlling the refractory, encouraging the well-disposed, prescribing or enforcing the several duties of each department; and consulting with the tenderness, justice, and impartiality, as well as with the strictness, of a common master, for the welfare of all his dependents, not less than for their good discipline and proper behaviour.

Now the qualities which are most indispensable to constitute a proper subject for a delegated and responsible trust, whether it be the management of property or the exercise of power, generally stated are these two; fidelity and prudence. Neither of them would be sufficient for the purpose by itself; but together they will make up the perfection of the character of a servant, to be left in trust; of a steward, with the care of property; of a deputy governor, with the enjoyment of temporary authority over others.

Fidelity without prudence might err in the discharge of its commission, from defect of ability though not of principle; that is, involuntarily and without intending it: while prudence without fidelity might do the same, from defect of principle though not of ability; that is, deliberately and on purpose. Fidelity, then, will be a check upon prudence, against the abuse of the trust designedly; and prudence will be a safeguard to fidelity, against the failure of duty through ignorance and incapacity. These two, therefore, are specified as the qualities which determine the choice of the individual, upon whom though invested with the character of his steward already, his master thinks proper to repose the commission of a new and an extra trust—which the new and extraordinary circumstances in which his household is about to be placed, render necessary: by appointing him his lieutenant or deputy also, during his absence.

A steward in this situation being intrusted not only with the use and disposal of his master's substance, but also with the enjoyment and exercise of his master's prerogative—but with both, solely for his master's good, and for the benefit of the subordinate members of his family; the duties to which he becomes more especially bound by virtue of his combined relations, are these two; the careful management of his master's property, on the one hand, and the moderate exercise of his master's power, on the other. He must take care that all the members of his family shall have enough for their wants; yet not allow ought of the necessary supply to be wasted and lost: he must maintain strict discipline and good order in all parts of the household, and yet do

nothing tyrannically, nor evil entreat, or oppress with unnecessary harshness and severity, any of those beneath him. The faults to which he is consequently most liable are the opposites of these two duties: mismanagement as a steward, on the one hand, and abuse of power as the representative of a master, on the other. And as the former constitute the instances of his duty, the latter will constitute those of his misconduct; as the former must be the natural results of a voluntary principle of obedience, so must the latter be of a voluntary principle of disobedience; and as the design and effect of the former would be the good of others, and consequently disinterested so far as regarded himself, so will the design and effect of the latter be exclusively selfish, or for himself. The disposal of his master's property, which was confided to him to provide for the necessities of his dependents, and should have been applied with all due regard to œconomy, even for that purpose, he will abuse to the lavish indulgence of his own licentious appetites. The commission of his master's supremacy, which was intrusted to him for the sake of the order and good government, essential to every well regulated society, but not to be maintained except by the possession and exercise of power somewhere, he will pervert into the means of tyranny and oppression—he will avail himself of, for the display of personal consequence, and the gratification of personal pride and vanity; for the mere wanton parade of authority, on occasions which do not require it; for needless acts of severity, for arbitrary, capricious, and partial distinctions in the times, the degrees, and the objects of the exercise of his trust, more calculated to discourage the dutiful,

the diligent, and the good, than to intimidate the unruly, the idle, and the negligent.

Nor ought the supposed possibility of such an abuse of his delegated trust, to be considered at variance with what was observed on the implicit union of the qualities of fidelity and prudence, in the person of the individual, selected to hold it. The possession of those qualities by the individual in question, might be matter of presumption, as much as of experience; and mere presumption might turn out to be mistaken; or were they even matter of actual experience, yet the experience could have gone no further than the proof of the talents or fidelity of the party, in his capacity simply of steward; but not yet in that of his master's deputy also.

If the office of a steward as such entailed any degree of authority over the rest of the family, still in the immediate presence, and under the observation of a master, it would be more a nominal or honorary, than a real and positive, authority; or though it might invest its possessor with an actual degree of power, as well as a certain elevation of rank, over his fellow-servants, yet the presence of a common master, acting as a constant check, would keep that authority from being abused, which under other circumstances, was liable to be so. Change of situation, involving a change of relations and calling for a difference of conduct; developing new principles and motives of action; exposing to fresh temptations, and bringing with it greater opportunities of doing wrong; often produces a change of character: and many there are, who after having conducted themselves in a subordinate station, under

the immediate inspection and constant control of their proper superiors, with exemplary fidelity and moderation, have shewn themselves unworthy of confidence and impotent of power, and have become tyrants on a greater or a smaller scale, according to the circumstances of the case, upon being released from all superintendence and restraint, and left entirely to themselves. Hence, the maxim ascribed to one of the seven sages of Greece, ὅτι ἀρχὰ τὸν ἄνδρα δείξει: 'Power or rule, will shew the man.'

For one, then, who has been elevated from a dependent to an independent station, subject only to the certainty of a future account, there is no constant security against the danger to which he is constantly exposed, of the abuse of the powers of his station, but to keep steadily before his eyes the recollection of his responsibility, and the prospect of his ultimate account; to remember that however unrestricted his authority and absolute his independence may be at the time, he is still but the servant and vicegerent of another; and however distant the period of the change, he must sometime again subside into his former subordinate station, (unless his good conduct meanwhile has entitled him to a continuance of confidence, and to higher degrees of promotion,) and must render besides a strict explanation of the use or abuse of his temporary trust.

Hence it is that, in the parable, the first cause of the maladministration of the power, entrusted to the servant in the absence of his master, is traced to the forgetfulness of the fact of this responsibility; that is, to the presumptive assurance that the time when any personal account for his conduct was to be exacted by his master, if it was ever to arrive, was still

distant; and that the immediate liberty or freedom from restraint, committed to the discretion of its temporary possessor, might be directed to any of its possible uses and applications, whether good or bad, for the present at least, with the consciousness of safety and impunity. For thus is the evil servant described as saying to himself in the first place, My lord is long in coming; and then, under the persuasion of present, if not of future irresponsibility, as beating his fellow-servants, from the impulse of mere wantonness—and as eating and drinking, and becoming drunken, in the indulgence of his own sensual appetites—in the next place.

Now the ministers of religion, according to St. Paul's definition of them, are servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel; that is, they are the depositaries of the word of God, they have both the custody and the dispensation of revealed truth, committed to them. It is required of them in this capacity, as of all stewards in their proper relative capacity, that they be found faithful and worthy of trust; watching over and preserving the purity and totality of the scriptures, neither adding to nor taking away from the matter of their trust—the word of God confided to their teaching, the substance and particulars of holy writ—but interpreting and delivering the whole doctrine and counsel of God, with corresponding simplicity, exactness, and truth.

In the absence of Christ also, the only true Lord and Governor of the church or household of faith, they sustain, as his deputies and vicegerents, the charge of presiding over it in his stead; with the express design and purpose of supplying his place,

in ministering to the spiritual wants, and promoting the spiritual welfare, of his people: for which reason, among their other titles, *they* are styled shepherds or pastors, as those who have something to take care of and to feed, and the *people* are called their flocks, as taken care of and fed by them. In this capacity also, it is required of them that they be found true to their trust, and prudent and discreet in its management; tempering the provision and quality of the spiritual sustenance which it is their duty to administer, both to the necessities and to the capacities of those who receive it; founding and grounding, as well as building and edifying; sowing and planting, as well as training and nurturing to maturity; supplying the milk of the word for babes in Christ, and strong meat for men, but enough, and that too, of their proper food—according to the exigencies of the case, for the improvement of all in spiritual health and strength.

They are intrusted, likewise, for the better discharge of their delegated functions, with a portion of the power and authority of the Master whom they represent, over every order of persons in his church; that is, with so much of it as is necessary to enforce the observances of Christian duty, and the rules of Christian discipline, in Christian societies as such; and to establish a just and legitimate accordance between the actual lives of the nominal members of the communion of the church, and the principles of the religion which they all profess. And in the exercise of this branch of the ministerial prerogative more especially, it is requisite that the deputies and representatives of the Head of the church be found temperate and judicious, as well as honest

and faithful. For as nothing is more agreeable to the inclinations of human nature than the possession of power and superiority over others, this is that part of the ministerial privileges, which of all is most likely to be coveted, and except in the hands of consummate wisdom and equal fidelity, of all is most likely to be perverted.

It is evident too that the ministers of religion are capable of every species of the abuse of the ministerial commission, which would be most at variance with their proper discharge of it, and most opposed to their proper duty, as consisting in the faithful administration of their several trusts. They may corrupt and falsify the word of God; they may deprave and pervert it, in a variety of ways; they may turn it to purposes for which it was never intended, and withhold it from others to which it was always meant to be subservient; they may abuse it to inculcate error in faith, and to justify viciousness in practice; and may render it wholly ineffectual for wholesome instruction in points both of doctrine and duty—for vigorous reproof and necessary correction, for animating encouragement and exhortation. They may neglect their pastoral duties, and abuse their pastoral powers; and either care and concern themselves little about their flocks, or only mislead and misgovern them. They may both deteriorate the kinds, and stint the degrees, of the spiritual food and nourishment, which they are bound to furnish them. They may withhold from the people the means of grace, and deny them their due share in the covenanted blessings and benefits of the Gospel. But above all they may take advantage of their ghostly influence over the consciences of the people,

to pander in a variety of ways and under a variety of false pretences, to their own secular views and criminal purposes, their thirst of power or worldly advancement, their love of money and filthy lucre, or what is equally possible, their voluptuous passions and carnal appetites.

The return of the Master, in this parable also, is the commencement of an œconomy of retribution to both classes of the servants whom he had left in trust behind him, the deserving and the undeserving alike. And the return, as in the former instance, being sudden and unexpected, the mode of occupation in which it surprises the several subjects of these trusts, is construed, as before, into a proof and criterion of their habitual mode of administering them, all along; and is rewarded or resented accordingly. For on the one hand, a blessing is pronounced on the servant, who should be discovered employed in the honest and prudent discharge of his commission, according to the purpose for which it was intended, the good of the Master and the benefit of his family—promising him a reward in kind; that is, in return for the faithful and meritorious discharge of an office of inferior dignity and minor confidence, the specific distinction of being invested with another of superior consequence and greater trust; which implies both a reward, and a reward in kind. "Of a truth I say unto you, he "will appoint him over all his possessions." And this kind of recompense, we shall perhaps have an opportunity of shewing more at large elsewhere, to be that which is specially promised to the due fulfilment of the ministerial trust.

On the other hand, a punishment of correspond-

ing magnitude is denounced against the servant, whom the unexpected arrival of his master should surprise in the abuse of his delegated commission: "The lord of that servant shall come in a day "which he expecteth not, and at an hour which he "knoweth not, and shall cut him off, and set his "portion among the unfaithful[h]." Here, as the word which is rendered to cut off, expresses only a preliminary and therefore an imperfect act, it must be descriptive merely of part of the punishment threatened under such circumstances, and that too, the least severe of all. To what end the preliminary act is directed, appears from the sequel; he shall set his portion *or* his place with the unfaithful—the unbelieving—or as St. Matthew has it, with the hypocrites; with those who reposed no confidence in the assurance of their master's return; with those

[h] Epictet. iv. i. 544: *κἂν εὕρῃς τοιοῦτον* (that is, a man not yet free from the dominion of passion, prejudice, or the like) *λέγε δοῦλον ἀνοχὰς ἔχοντα ἐν Σατορναλίοις· λέγε ὅτι ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ ἀποδημεῖ, εἶθ' ἥξει καὶ γνώσῃ* (leg. *γνώσεται*) *οἷα πάσχει* (leg. *πράσσει*). *τίς ἥξει; πᾶς ὃς αὐτεξουσίαν ἔχῃ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τινὸς θελομένων* (corr. *δεδομένων*) *πρὸς τὸ περιποιῆσαι ταῦτα ἢ ἀφελέσθαι.* Cf. Revel. iii. 20.

Valerius Maximus, iv. 1. Extern. 1. relates this anecdote of Archytas. When after a long absence from home, he was returned to his country, ac rura sua revisere cœpit, animadvertit negligentia villici corrupta et perdita: intuensque male meritum: *Sumpsissem*, inquit, *a te supplicium nisi tibi iratus essem.*

> Ac veluti famuli, mendax quos mortis herilis
> Nuncius in luxum falso rumore resolvit,
> Dum marcent epulis, atque inter vina chorosque
> Persultat vacuis effrena licentia tectis;
> Si reducem dominum fors improvisa revexit,
> Hærent attoniti, libertatemque perosus
> Conscia servilis præcordia concutit horror.
>
> Claudian. de Bello Getico, 366.

whom the consciousness of their own responsibility could not induce to be upon principle, faithful to their trust; or with those who, under the specious exterior of fidelity, zeal, and personal attachment to a master, assumed during the presence of their proper lord and superior, to gain his confidence, and to render themselves the objects of his choice to further offices of authority and trust—disguised the vices of dishonesty, faithlessness, selfishness. This punishment is not supposed to be undergone in all its magnitude and all its terrors, until the lot of the unworthy servant is thus cast, in some state of being appropriated to persons of that description; where, as St. Matthew concludes his account by observing, "shall be wailing and the gnashing of "teeth[i]."

[i] It appears, therefore, that though διχοτομεῖν, the word rendered by *cutting off*, may properly denote to *cut asunder*—and though as a mode of punishment sometimes resorted to in the East, to cut in two, to saw the body asunder, might be literally understood; yet such is not its meaning in the present instance. It denotes, here, merely to cut in two, in the sense of cutting off, that is, excommunicating or excluding, one member of a certain society from any longer participation in it; in its name, its privileges, or the like. The lord of the servant, on the discovery of his unworthiness, begins with severing him from the rest of his family; setting him aside from the number of those whom he intends to belong still to his household, to live in his society, and to partake in the benefits of the relation of one of his servants to himself. This may well be considered an act preliminary to something else. The punishment of the servant under such circumstances, may begin with this kind of retribution, which is more negative than positive, and consists rather in the loss of good than the acquisition of evil; but it cannot stop short with it. The loss of positive good under such circumstances must entail the acquisition of positive evil—either proximate or remote; and he who begins with being shut

Again, the practical directions interspersed in, or subjoined to these parables respectively, are such as presuppose an œconomy of probation, *during* which they are to be observed, and an œconomy of retribution, *against* which their observance will be found available. The assurance of the master's return, sometime or other, is absolute and unqualified; the time when, is left indefinite. The most general precept of duty, then, which could be inculcated on servants or dependents, whom the absence of their master exempts from present control, but whom the futurity of his return sometime or other, still renders liable to inquiry and animadversion, is to be always on the watch; that is, always prepared, for his arrival; always intent on the business of their place and station—as the most effectual precaution not to be taken by surprise, and as the best means of qualifying themselves for their future account, whenever it may be demanded of them.

The obvious justness of this conclusion is illustrated by a case in point. "And this ye know, that "had the master of the house reason to expect the "attempt of thieves to break into his house, on a "particular night, he would sit up, and be on the "watch, *all* that night; much more, if he had rea- "son to expect such an attempt during a certain "watch, or at a certain hour of the night, would he "be on his guard against it *during* that watch, or "*at* that hour. There is just the same reason why "ye should hold yourselves also in constant readi-

out from the enjoyment of the common happiness of the rest of his fellow-servants, must end in being consigned to some state of misery, peculiar to himself, or to such as him, distinctly from the rest.

" ness: for ye may be assured the Son of man will " *sometime* come again, though *when*, ye cannot be " assured. Watch always, therefore, that so ye may " be always ready, let his coming take place when " it may."

Now if rules and maxims of conduct are intended to be observed at all, they must be intended for a time when their observance is possible. Such precepts as these could be observed only during an œconomy of probation, though the effect of their observance might be to prepare the observers for an œconomy of retribution. The former, then, is directly presupposed in the immediate use and application of such injunctions; the latter virtually, in their final end and effect.

In like manner, a rule of judgment is laid down at the close of both the parables, the knowledge or assurance of which beforehand, can be meant to be practically useful only for those, who are placed under an œconomy of probation; while its application or enforcement at last can take place solely in the process of an œconomy of retribution. This rule is summarily stated, first in reference to the subordinate members of the former parable: " Now that " servant, who knew the will of his own lord, and " made no preparation, neither did according to his " will, shall be beaten with many *stripes:* but he " who did not know *it*, yet did things worthy of " stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*." In which, it is not said, that even he who has offended unwittingly against his master's will, may not expect to be punished; but as reason and equity both would require, only in his due proportion, and with every allowance for the want of a criminal inten-

tion; certainly not with the severity which may be expected by one who not only offends against his master's will, but offends knowingly and deliberately. Christians in general, whose lives and conduct should be at variance with the will and commands of the Master, whom they profess to acknowledge and obey, as declared to them in his Gospel, would be in the situation of servants who offended knowingly against their master's will; and the rest of mankind, whose lives and conduct might be as much at variance with the abstract rules of morality and duties of religion, as those of nominal Christians may be, though not in defiance of the same light as their's, would be in the predicament of servants supposed to offend against the will of their master, without knowing it.

Secondly, in reference to the subordinate personages of the latter parable; "And unto whomso-
"ever much hath been given, much shall be re-
"quired from him; and to whom *they* have com-
"mitted much, of him they will ask the more ex-
"ceedingly"—a rule of judgment expressly, as I conceive, applicable to the dispensation of reward or punishment, to the ministers of religion in particular, which we shall find an opportunity of explaining hereafter. For it is to be observed, in concluding the consideration of the present allegory, that there are other parables, the subject of which is very much the same as that of these two, referring as they all do, to an œconomy of probation in conjunction with an œconomy of retribution, such as we have here supposed. In these we shall perceive that what is briefly hinted at now, is developed and explained at greater length. These parables, however, occur later

in the gospel history; which so far accounts for the difference of manner in which the common subject of them all is treated of respectively by each. With regard to communications made at different times, in reference to the same things in general, and especially to communications made prophetically, and in anticipation of the future—it is an invariable rule, that in clearness, minuteness, and circumstantiality of detail, the later have the advantage of the earlier.

I mentioned in the course of the chapter, which I referred to, of the General Introduction, that different senses might be given to the phrase, Coming of the Son of man; and therefore different periods might be assigned to the œconomy of probation terminated by that coming. I shall shew, hereafter, that it was designed to be first understood of the visitation of the Jews; in which case, the duration of the corresponding œconomy of probation antecedent to that visitation, is the interval between the foundation of the Christian church and the destruction of Jerusalem. This would be a period or state of trial, preparatory to the coming of the Son of Man, and terminated by it, in which none could have so distinct and peculiar an interest as the members of the Hebrew church; which being the case, we may take leave of the consideration of the present chapter, by observing that the unity of the discourse is so far preserved unbroken to the last: and the parties addressed in this last paragraph of all that we have yet considered, are addressed in the same capacity still, as the future members of the first, that is, the Hebrew, Christian church.

PARABLE FIFTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

LUKE XIII. 1—9. HARMONY, P. IV. 33.

LUKE xiii. 1—9.

1 Now certain were present the selfsame season, giving him an account concerning the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Think ye that these Galilæans have been sinners "above all the Galilæans, because they have suffered such "things? 3 By no means, say I unto you: but if ye do not "repent, ye will all perish in like manner. 4 Or they, the "eighteen, upon whom fell the tower in Siloam, and killed "them, think ye that these *men* had been debtors (transgressors) "above all men that were dwelling in Jerusalem? 5 By no "means, say I unto you: but if ye do not repent, ye will all "likewise perish."

6 Moreover he spake this parable: "A certain *man* had a "fig-tree, which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came, "seeking for fruit in it, and found *it* not. 7 And he said to the "dresser of the vineyard, Behold, three years am I coming, "seeking for fruit in this fig-tree, and I find *it* not: cut it out "*of the ground;* to what purpose doth it render even the soil "useless? 8 And he answered and saith to him, Sir, let it "alone for this year also, until I have dug about it, and cast *in* "dung. 9 And should it have produced fruit—but if not, thou "shalt cut it *out of the ground* against the next *year*."

PRELIMINARY MATTER.

IN my former work, when treating of the chronological position of this part of the Gospel of St. Luke,

I endeavoured to shew that the transaction referred to at the commencement of the narrative, the death of certain Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, was probably a recent event; that the sufferers in question were not followers of Judas of Galilee, but in all probability some of the inhabitants of Galilee; that there had been a disturbance or riot in Jerusalem, in consequence of which these Galilæans, while engaged in the act of sacrificing in the temple, had unfortunately lost their lives; that Barabbas was probably the ringleader of this sedition; that the slaughter of some of the subjects of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, by the soldiers of Pilate, in quelling this disturbance, was probably the reason of the enmity between Herod and Pilate, which is said to have been existing at the time of the last passover, as well as the cause of the presence of the former in Jerusalem, with an armed force; that all these things had occurred between the beginning and the conclusion of our Lord's last circuit, and perhaps not long before his arrival at Jerusalem itself [a].

For the necessary proof of these particulars, I refer the reader to my former work. Without saying any more, then, of the occasion which gave rise to the present conversation, I shall proceed to the discourse itself; which being distributed by the narrative into two parts, the first of them not only preceding, but conducting to, the second, the consideration of the former will be requisite as preliminary to that of the latter. The first of these divisions consists of the answer returned by our Saviour di-

[a] Dissertations, vol. ii. Diss. xx. p. 553—562.

rectly, to the persons who had just made the communication in question, respecting the fate of the Galilæans; the second of the parable of the fig-tree, planted in the vineyard.

When our Saviour was thus informed of what had recently happened in Jerusalem, there is every reason to believe that he was travelling somewhere in Galilee, in the dominions of Herod Antipas; and as a part of the inhabitants of that country had been sufferers by the event, it is not improbable also that they were some of their countrymen, who told him of what had happened to them. It might be of importance to know the precise description of the persons who addressed this communication to him, in order the better to comprehend the drift and application of the answer, which he himself returned to them. But nothing can be inferred with certainty on this subject, from what passed at the time, further than that, whether belonging to Galilee, or to any other part of Judæa, they must have been some of the still unbelieving and impenitent Jews in general. It is not clear from our Lord's reply, whether he included the persons to whom he was speaking, among *all* the Galilæans, who had survived the disastrous fate of a part of their countrymen, or excluded them from that number; but it is clear that he supposed even those to whom he was speaking, to be still impenitent, and still in urgent need of repentance, for *some* sin; which sin is distinctly implied to be the sin of unbelief—of the continued refusal to listen to the preaching of our Lord, as a minister of repentance, or to acknowledge his claims to the character of the expected Messiah.

It has been imagined, that the persons who made

the present communication, were some of our Lord's most constant attendants, the Scribes or Pharisees; to which supposition perhaps it would be no objection, that it is not expressly stated by the evangelist who they were; but that they are described in general terms, as "certain that were present at the "self-same season" merely. But the opinion itself appears to be founded on a precarious assumption, which however worthy it may be of the possible malignity of Scribes or Pharisees, in other instances, is not supported by the evidence of the fact, in the present case; and without support from unquestionable testimony, ought not gratuitously to be assumed even of them. The Galilæans who had suffered on the recent occasion, being justly concluded to be some of the inhabitants of Galilee, it has been taken for granted that the persons who told our Saviour of their fate, were certain of the Scribes and Pharisees—because, in common with the rest of the Jews of Judæa proper, they held the inhabitants of Galilee in almost as much contempt or abhorrence, compared with themselves, as they did Gentiles or Samaritans; and that their motive in mentioning the news of the event to him, was a malicious satisfaction, which they could not help feeling in the evil that had just happened to some of an hated nation; as if none of them deserved any better treatment.

But the calamity which had befallen these Galilæans in particular, was accompanied by a direct profanation of the temple, and a very grievous outrage on the national religion; if it be true, as we have supposed, that the scene of the disturbance was the temple, and the blood of the sufferers from the fury or vengeance of Pilate, was mingled with

that of their sacrifices. This was a distinct circumstance of aggravation, to which no Jew could possibly be indifferent; and to be willing to excuse such an outrage on the sanctity of the temple, and the honour of their religion, merely because the principal sufferers in its consequences, were certain of a nation whom they despised or disliked, would be a refinement of malice, greater than we can suppose possible even of the Scribes and Pharisees; to whose other bad qualities it cannot be added, that they were deficient in zeal, real or pretended, for the immunity of the established religion, and the inviolability of the temple.

The truth of the assumption itself, that the native Jews did actually concur to think so contemptuously and so uncharitably, of their Galilæan countrymen, may very well be questioned. It is true, that some of the fathers, as Chrysostom and Theophylact, in their commentaries on the Gospels, may be found to assert it; but the assertion is not confirmed by Josephus: who, though he describes the Galilæans as not so refined and polished as the Jews of Jerusalem, and as of a more turbulent and refractory spirit than others of their countrymen, yet gives no reason to suppose that they were not acknowledged by the rest, and treated, as brethren. If the native Jews held the Galilæans in an inferior estimation, it was not to the extent of disliking or hating them, but merely with regard to certain honorary distinctions or privileges, in which they claimed the precedence to themselves. Thus it was, that the Pharisees told Nicodemus, "no prophet "had arisen out of Galilee[b];" and so it is, that the

[b] John vii. 52.

rabbis inform us, no master or teacher, to be endowed with an adequate degree of personal repute and authority, could be of the same country.

In the present instance, however, the supposition that either any unfavourable opinion of the Galilæans in general, or any secret satisfaction in what had happened to them, was entertained by the persons who informed our Lord of their fate, is overthrown by the tenor of his reply, and by the nature of the case to which he appeals as parallel, in the fact of another incident, analogous to the recent one. For, first, though his answer is certainly addressed to some persuasion which must have existed in the minds of the persons present, relating to these Galilæans, it is clearly not to any persuasion which concerned communities as such, but individuals; not to what the persons present must have thought of the Galilæans generally, but what they must have thought of these Galilæans in particular. In the next place, he appeals to another instance of a misfortune which had affected *Jews*, just as much as the recent disaster had affected *Galilæans;* an instance which he produces as analogous, in the matter of fact, to the other, and in respect to the opinions, judgments, or feelings of the persons who knew of it, with regard to those who had suffered by it—as authorizing precisely the same conclusions. If then they had taken a malicious pleasure in the fate of the Galilæans, they must have done the same in the death of the eighteen, who perished at Siloam; and if the motive to the pleasure in the former instance, was that they hated, and wished only evil to the Galilæans, the cause of the satisfaction in the latter must have been, that they entertained the same

kind of feelings towards the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The truth is, that with respect to the personal motive of the speakers, which actuated them to make the communication in question, whether good or bad, we have no authority from the evidence of the narrative to draw any conclusion. The utmost that we can conjecture with certainty about their opinions, is the nature of the construction which they must have put upon the fact itself, with reference to a further question, the *moral* deserts of the sufferers by it.

That they concluded these Galilæans to be eminently sinners, we may safely presume, because our Saviour himself charges them with it: that they drew this conclusion from the extraordinary nature of the evil which had befallen them, may likewise be inferred, because he too assigns that as the reason of the conclusion. Now, if this conclusion, affecting the moral character or deserts of such and such persons, was supposed to be justly deducible from the nature of the event which had befallen them, it must have been founded ultimately on the presumption of the truth of these *two* propositions; *first*, that temporal calamities of every kind, were dispensations of the providence of God; and *secondly*, that temporal calamities, as dispensations and effects of the Divine providence, were so many judgments upon sin.

With the grounds of this presumption itself, whether as reasonably or unreasonably entertained; with the consequent truth or credibility of either of the propositions, on which it was founded, the answer of our Saviour has nothing to do. It decides neither

upon the propriety nor on the impropriety of the persuasion in question: it specifies neither in what way, and to what extent, casual events in general are dispensations of Providence, nor how such casual events as temporal calamities in particular, are judicial visitations upon moral evil. It pronounces nothing on the *principle* of such and such inferences with respect to persons—from such and such events which happen to befall them; but assuming merely the fact of its existence, and its being admitted in general, it is directed altogether to its use and application in the particular case. His answer is consequently an *argumentum ad homines;* the object of which is to reprove the hearers, and to bring home a certain conviction to their consciences, even on their own assumptions. These Galilæans, who had recently perished, might be sinners, and might have deserved their fate—the calamity which had befallen them, might be a punishment for sin, and so far judicially incurred. But, allowing the truth of all this as concerning them, still it was not surely for the hearers to draw the consequent inference of *their guilt,* or to pass any judgment, condemnatory of them, founded on the evidence of what had happened to them—if being equally sinners in the sight of God, they too were equally obnoxious to his justice, and they too had as much to apprehend from the temporal visitations of his providence.

The point at issue, therefore, in the present instance, between our Lord and his hearers, concerned the personal *moral* application of the late event; whether such a meaning was to be given it as would make it general, or would make it partial in its sig-

nificancy *per se*, and its reference to persons; a profitable lesson even to those who had not shared in the consequences of the event, or for any practical use and purpose as related to them, a mere dead letter. The contrast lies between the construction which they of their own accord would have put upon the fact, and that which he considers them bound to put upon it, as the fittest and most natural that it was calculated to bear. He wishes to make it useful to the living; they would have confined it to the dead: they build upon it to the disparagement of the moral deserts of the sufferers; he prophesies from it to alarm the survivors: his hearers would have called it a *judgment;* he bids them consider it a *warning*.

From this marked opposition between the sentiments of the two parties in the conversation, and the difference of the view which they take respectively of the same transaction, as authorizing such and such inferences; I think we may conclude that whatever might be the motive of the speakers in making *their* communication to our Lord, that which actuated him in making *his* reply, was a feeling of indignation at their want of charity for the unfortunate Galilæans, and a sense of pity for their want of compunction in behalf of themselves. Their want of charity was attested by the unfavourable conclusion, respecting the moral character and personal deserts of the sufferers, which they were inclined to draw from the evidence of their fate; and their want of compunction for themselves, by the very hardness of heart, which, rendering them insensible to pity in behalf of others, prevented their consciences from taking alarm at the calamity which

had befallen them, and making a personal application of the fate of others, to their own case. But that sinners should sit in judgment upon sinners; that the guilty should condemn the guilty; and that those who have nothing to hope for but from the mercy of God, should nevertheless presume on his justice, and believe themselves sure of his acceptance when they ought to be in fear of his vengeance; was an inconsistency which could not fail to raise our Lord's indignation, and to draw from him a sharp reproof.

If the misfortune of these Galilæans was a certain intimation of the divine displeasure against sin, and a certain evidence of the punishment which, sooner or later, may be expected to overtake it even in this life; how hardened must the conscience be, which, with such a warning, and under the contemplation of such a prospect, would not, even on its own principles, take alarm, nor ask itself, whether it too had committed no sin—whether it too had nothing to dread from the wrath of God, and the sure consequences of his unappeased displeasure. This total blindness to his own situation—this imperturbable apathy of feeling, and reckless indifference to the future, where the conscience should be tenderly alive to the sense of guilt, and tremblingly disquieted under the apprehension of punishment, must be an insuperable bar to the amendment of the sinner; the necessity of which amendment must be felt, before repentance, and its legitimate effects in the reformation of the character, can take place. It is not to be supposed that our Lord would see any of his hearers exhibit the symptoms of such a state of their moral sense as this, without regret, or without

attempting to awaken them to a better and a juster estimate of their true situation.

By correcting the uncharitable notions of the living, our Lord did no more than justice to the character of the dead; who ought not to be gratuitously represented as worse than they were. As to the question of absolute, personal worthiness or unworthiness in either, he institutes no comparison between them; he pronounces neither to be better, neither to be worse, than the other, but all to be guilty alike before God, all to be equally liable to punishment, unless forgiven, and equally in need of repentance, in order to be forgiven. The dead were inferior to the living—the living were superior to the dead—neither in the actual merits of their own case, but merely in the accidental circumstance of difference, that the account of the one was over, that of the other was still to come—the one had nothing any longer to hope from the mercy, if they had no more to fear from the justice of God, in the present life; but the other had both.

This advantage, however, on the side of the survivor—for an advantage it certainly was, since by prolonging the period of his trial, it delayed the execution of his punishment, and by allowing him opportunity to repent, meanwhile—might enable him to escape from it altogether at last—was yet capable of becoming the source of a greater evil. Mercy and long-suffering, when abused, are an additional provocation to justice; and the continued impenitence of those, who have been spared in the hope of their ultimate repentance and amendment, by rendering them comparatively more guilty than those

who have been punished already, without any such previous indulgence, renders them justly liable to so much the severer treatment at last.

When, therefore, even the prediction of the final destruction of those who had not shared in the immediate consequences of the present calamity, is still made to depend on the supposition of their continuing impenitent to the last—the very disposition to suspend the fulfilment of his judgments upon any condition, and therefore to arrest them in their progress, and to stop their immediate execution, is a proof of the tender mercy, the patience and lenity of God, even towards the most guilty—as all but inexhaustible by the obstinacy of sinners themselves, and their stubborn perseverance in sin. There is no doubt that were the surviving Galilæans or the rest of their contemporaries, equally sinners with those who had perished, they also, on their own principles, might with equal justice have been cut off by the same, or by any similar calamity—as the others had been. That they were spared then still, while their countrymen had perished, did not add to the supposed demerits of the latter, or warrant any unreasonable presumption of superior personal worthiness in the former; but was simply a means and opportunity of further trial, which whether it should turn out an act of grace, or become an aggravation of guilt, in their instance, must depend on the use they made of it, to their own improvement. If they did not repent, sooner or later, they too must die in their sins; and though mercy for a time might glory over judgment, yet justice in the end must triumph over mercy.

The propriety of taking advantage of a past, but a

partial instance of temporal calamity, affecting *some* of the members of a certain community—to build upon it the prophecy of a future and general destruction, to be apprehended by all—where the grounds of the visitation, whether on a smaller or a larger scale, were still the same—must be evident. That the present incident also was naturally adapted to give rise to such an enlarged application of it, is equally obvious. And as the whole of the unbelieving Jewish community was divisible only into the two comprehensive members of the native Jews and the Galilæans, respectively; so it is observable, we have two instances adduced of visitations distinctly affecting, in the first place, only a certain part of either of these divisions, each of which is made the foundation of a prophetical warning, by way of admonition to the rest, of what might be similarly expected for similar reasons, by all. The first of these is that which we have been hitherto considering; the second is the case of the eighteen, on whom the tower fell in Siloam; an example which considered as a warning, applied as directly to the survivors among the native Jews, or the existing inhabitants of Jerusalem, as the other did to those among the Galilæans [c].

[c] The circumstances of this event are not specified, and therefore can only be conjectured. The occurrence was probably a well-known fact, though probably not so recent as the incident relating to the Galilæans. Who the sufferers by it were, viz. some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; how many perished, viz. eighteen persons; in what way and where, viz. by the falling of one of the towers of the walls of the city, near the pool of Siloam, which is known to have been outside the city—thus much is clearly stated, or may implicitly be inferred, about the event; but not more. Nor in fact is it of any importance

It should also be observed, that this is the first of a series of predictions, relating to a common subject, the punishment of the infidel Jews, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Other prophecies may be met with in the course of the Gospel history, relating to this subject—which came after the present; but none, which occurred before it. Now the delivery of such predictions first was to be expected towards the close of our Saviour's ministry, rather than earlier in its progress: for it was but necessary that the trial or probation of the Jews by the personal ministry of the Messiah among them, should have been some time going on, and even be drawing to an end, before the denunciation of the penal consequences, to be apprehended from the fact of its failure, in their continued impenitence and infidelity, could properly begin to take place. Nor is this precedence in the order of time, and as ushering in the first of the disclosures, confined to this topic, an unimportant circumstance in the present instance. It is the established rule in the course of successive prophetical revelations upon the same subjects, that the least minute and circumstantial are the earliest of the series. We see this rule illustrated in the present prophecy, compared with others of the same kind which follow it hereafter. In predicting the general certainty of some definite retribution for the definite offence of unbelief and impenitence, it is as

that we should know every thing concerning the particulars of the transaction, so long as the use and construction, in a moral point of view, of so much of it as is known, are not left doubtful. And these appear plainly from our Saviour's reasoning, founded upon the fact.

explicit as any; in specifying or detailing its particulars, it is the most incomplete of all. Subsequent communications supplied this desideratum; though with more or less of clearness, as they were addressed to the disciples of our Lord, or to the Jews at large: and to all these the present prophecy is so related, as to be equally adapted to stand at the head of each, and to derive light and explanation from each [d].

[d] We may remark, too, on the additional solemnity which is communicated to the prediction, by the repetition in each instance, of the words, οὐχὶ, λέγω ὑμῖν—the proper force of which is not, "I tell you, nay," but "By no means, say I unto you"—for οὐχὶ is never used, even in classical writers, except where a stronger form of the particle of negation, than οὐ or οὐκ would have been, is required to do justice to the assurance conveyed.

There is a difference of phraseology also in the expressions, πάντες ὡσαύτως, and πάντες ὁμοίως—the former in reference to the death of the Galilæans, the latter to that of the Jews who perished at Siloam. Now, if ὡσαύτως and ὁμοίως be both literally understood, the latter will predict a similarity of destruction merely as to the *fact* of the destruction generally, but the former as to the *mode* and circumstances also. For ὡσαύτως means "in "the *same way*," and ὁμοίως "*similarly*." Whether this distinction was intended or not, still it is in accommodation to the reality of the thing predicted, in each instance. The destruction of the unbelieving Jews at last, so far as concerned the *fact* itself, was sudden, indiscriminate, and complete, like that of the eighteen, who perished at Siloam; and in the *mode* and circumstances of the event, bore no imperceptible relation to the fate of the Galilæans. As *these* had fallen by the sword of the Romans, so did *those:* and with a still more critical coincidence between the events, as the Galilæans had fallen in the temple itself, nay in the very act of offering sacrifice; so, as Josephus informs us, might numbers of the Jews, during the siege of Jerusalem, be seen perishing daily under the weapons of the Romans, within the courts of the sacred enclosures, close to the altar, and intent at the time on the same employment, as the Galilæans, their prototypes in such destruction, had been.

The particular providence under which we believe the nation of the Jews to have once been placed, and according to which every transgression received, even in the present life, an appropriate recompense of retribution—well-doing was encouraged by immediate reward, evil-doing was resented by immediate punishment—had ceased before that period in their history to which the Gospel ministry belongs. During the continuance of this providence, temporal calamity must of necessity have been considered a sign of the Divine displeasure, (at least when not expressly declared to be otherwise designed, and differently to be understood—as for the purpose of discipline and probation,) and therefore a judgment upon sin: especially such temporal calamities as while they involved consequences to the sufferer irremediable in the present life, and so far apparently final and absolute—such as the loss of life—were resolvable into accident, or were the effect of causes over which the sufferer himself had no control.

Whether it was the recollection of this former state of things, as the fixed rule and positive condition by which, and on which, the dispensation of temporal good and evil had once been regulated among them—or whether both reason and revelation might have taught the Jews anciently, as they may teach Christians still, to refer every thing which happened to them in the present life, whether for weal or for woe, either mediately or immediately to the good pleasure of the Divine appointments—certain it is that the tenor of our Lord's reasonings, above considered, presupposes such an impression on the minds of his audience in the present instance, as that the calamity which had recently befallen the

Galilæans, (though what would be ordinarily termed a purely fortuitous or accidental misfortune, in incurring which they themselves were entirely passive,) was a judgment inflicted by God for sin.

That the opinion was current among the Jews of our Saviour's time, that evil of any kind of which men could be the sufferers, either in their persons or in any other way, apparently without their own concurrence, and apparently without even their own deserving, was still more or less judicial, more or less a proof and an instance of the displeasure of a moral Governor for the demerit of moral guilt, appears from a variety of passages in the Gospels. Our Lord's disciples inquired of him, with reference to the blind man, discovered at the entrance of the temple, John ix. 1, 2. whether he or his parents had been *the sinners*, that he was born into the world with such a *natural infirmity*. The Pharisees reproached the same person soon after, (verse 34,) with being *altogether born in sins*.

That there was some foundation too for the opinion, appears from much higher authority. St. Matthew applies to our Lord the prophecy of Isaiah, "He himself received our infirmities, and carried "our sicknesses[e]:" as fulfilled by his curing all manner of diseases and all manner of infirmities; which implies that such diseases and infirmities were *penal*, that is, judicially the consequences of sin; which Christ could have borne or carried, and made atonement for, only by bearing and making atonement for the guilt of the sins, which occasioned them. Our Saviour's language to the paralytic,

[e] Matt. viii. 17. Harm. P. ii. 21.

whose cure is recorded by the three evangelists [f], and to the scribes, who charged him with blasphemy on the same occasion, distinctly implies that it was virtually the same thing to forgive sins, as to remove bodily infirmities. He said to the man whom he had cured of a thirty and eight years' infirmity, when he met with him after his cure in the temple, "Behold, thou art become whole. Sin no more, "lest a worse thing happen to thee [g]."

And to prove, that this state of the case is not to be understood as absolutely confined to the Jews, even after our Saviour's time—St. Paul apprises the Corinthians, that among the other bad consequences of their undue and indecorous observance of the Lord's supper, God had visited them on that account with sundry dispensations of his penal providence; that many of them were sick, and some were even dead, who might otherwise have been well or alive. He warns them that to make no distinction between the bread which denoted the Lord's body, and common bread—to eat and to drink the sacred elements unworthily, was to eat and to drink their own condemnation—and he tells them to judge themselves, that they might not be judged of the Lord.

Indeed, so long as the doctrine of a particular providence is admitted, every thing which happens to God's moral creatures, in the course of life, must be resolved either into his appointment, or into his permission; and therefore, all the evils of which they may individually become the subjects, must be

[f] Matt. ix. 2—9: Mark ii. 1—14: Luke v. 17—28. Harm. P. ii. 27.

[g] John v. 14. Harm. P. iii. 1.

considered either personal punishments or personal trials. It is very desirable that each individual moral agent should accustom himself to take this view of all such temporal dispensations, as often as they fall to his own lot; in which case, he could scarcely fail to profit by them accordingly, whether they were intended for one of these purposes, or for the other; and if they were punishments, to acknowledge their justice, and to submit to them with patience and resignation, as no more than his due, on various accounts, of which his own conscience would best assure him—if they were trials, to recognise their benevolent intent, and to use them as they were designed, for the wholesome and necessary, though painful and disagreeable means of his growth in grace, and personal spiritual improvement. But the case is different with respect to such dispensations—when they are seen to fall to the lot of others. These too may be intended for similar purposes, and may fulfil their proper use with respect to their proper subjects. But it is not for us to pronounce upon the end and design of that particular dispensation, which specially concerns our neighbour. It is our duty to put the best construction on every thing which happens to another, that the nature of the event will admit of; and there can be no breach of charity at any time, in regarding the evil which may fall to his lot, as meant for his trial and improvement, rather than for his punishment or his reprobation. But there are some things of this sort, which can scarcely be considered as trials; and therefore which we seem at first sight, almost compelled to construe into judgments: such as where the direct effect of the dispensation

on the proper subject of it, is apparently to deprive him of all power of profiting by it as a trial; which seems to be the case with those dispensations of temporal evil, which are fatal at the time to their subjects: though, whether even in such extreme cases as these, they may not be intended for, and may not have the effect of trials, in some way or other, is more than *we* can undertake to say. There is a natural predisposition too, in the human mind, to think the worse of those who have suffered from temporal misfortune of any kind, on that very account; and to conclude too hastily from the first impression, that they have perhaps met with no more than they deserved. This feeling is very uncharitable; and admitting even the premises on which the conclusion is mainly founded, that temporal evils are truly so many punishments for imputed guilt of some kind or other—still it must be as improper under the circumstances of the case, and as unbecoming in those who make it, as it is invidious and uncharitable in itself. It is not the business of one sinner to pass judgment on another; to think or to say that his neighbour has only met with his deserts, in coming to such and such an end, when he has reason to apprehend as much, or peradventure even more, on the very same account, for himself.

The tenor of our Saviour's observations, if we have explained them rightly, has a decided tendency to correct this disposition; and to inculcate a very different habit and turn of thought, from that which would lead to draw censorious and uncharitable inferences, upon the *prima facie* evidence of temporal misfortunes, as to the real moral deserts of the suf-

ferers from them. The question how far such misfortunes are truly to be regarded in the light of judgments, we have seen that he leaves as it was, without pronouncing upon it either in the affirmative or in the negative. They may be punishments for the sins of the sufferers, or they may not; but even if they are, their proper use and application in any other way—is for the sake of warning and admonition to those who may observe, or may hear of them; not to furnish the grounds of uncharitable, and so far unjust, reflections on the sufferers, but to alarm the fears even of those, who have as yet escaped the same things, though by the danger of their own situation they are always obnoxious to them. If sin is liable to such consequences from the dispensations of God's moral providence, even in this life, who is there that by immunity from the same kind of guilt, has no reason to apprehend the same kind of evil, as its punishment? Considered as judgments, no one but God can be authorized to pronounce on such events, whether they have been deserved by their subjects, or not; considered as warnings, every one may still profit by them, and make them available to his own repentance and amendment.

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND MORAL.

The material circumstances of the parable, which constitutes the second part of the present discourse, are too few and simple to require much explanation; and conspire too distinctly to one and the same result, for their meaning to be mistaken [h].

[h] It can scarcely be necessary to add any thing to the general argument upon the subject, premised in the Introduction, which

The basis or subject-matter of the narrative is the account of a transaction, which passes between two parties only, the owner of a vineyard, and his servant, the dresser or keeper of it; and the transaction is consequently such as alone could be supposed to pass between parties so related to each other and to the vineyard, in their proper relative capacity: the use or application of the ground set apart in vineyards, for the production of fruits; the treatment or disposal of the trees planted therein.

This owner of a vineyard, and his servant who has the charge of it under him, are represented to be holding a dialogue together; the object of which is to determine what should be done with one of the trees, planted and growing in the vineyard, described as a fig-tree; which though placed in a good soil, and duly attended to by the keeper of the garden, in common with the rest of its contents, yet for a number of years had borne no fruit; thus rendering unavailing the natural fertility of the ground, requiting the pains of culture with ingratitude, and disappointing the just expec-

would prove this parable to belong to the class of the allegorical, and be specially applicable to it in the present instance. I will observe only—first, that the discourse which preceded it, being prophetical, the parable which continued the discourse, it is reasonable to presume, would be prophetical also; and if prophetical, allegorical—to contain, or to be the vehicle of, prophecy, being a decisive criterion of every parable which is allegorical. Secondly, that remarkable circumstance in our Saviour's history, which occurs hereafter, the cursing of the barren fig-tree, is acknowledged to have been a symbolical action; and I hope to make it appear in the course of the present explanation, that the final end of *that* transaction was closely connected with the moral of *this* parable, and was purposely supplementary to it.

tations of its owner, with an empty show of leaves, instead of fruit.

The owner, therefore, whose patience with the tree had been tried for a number of years, in the hope that it might still begin to be productive—after the experience of repeated disappointments, is forced to abandon his expectation altogether, and to think of cutting down the tree, as irreclaimably barren and unproductive; that the native vigour of the soil at least, might not continue to be wasted on an useless tree, but something better being planted in its stead, the ground might so far be rendered subservient to its natural purposes, and its fertility be expended on a proper effect. Under these circumstances—when the period seemed to be now arrived for the excision or removal of the tree, not only with the utmost fitness and propriety, but even from an absolute sense of necessity — the gardener, or dresser of the vineyard, intercedes in its behalf—not to defend the tree, or to call in question the justice of the resolution conceived against it by the owner; but simply to procure a suspension of its sentence, and so far to allow it a longer and a further trial.

Nor is it the ultimate design of this intercession, to procure the suspension of the sentence for an indefinite period of time; but *only* for a certain interval, the limits of which are very distinctly implied; viz. for so much of the natural year, then current, as should suffice for a renewed exertion of the proper duties on his own part, in bestowing additional pains and labour upon the culture of the tree—digging about its roots, and throwing in fresh nourishment from beneath, to stimulate and support its vegetative

powers—and for the evidence of their effect on the tree, whether, in consequence of the treatment it had experienced, it should be found, at the proper time, to have yielded fruit, or to be likely to do so, or to continue still as barren and unprofitable as ever. The proper measure of this interval is that portion of the natural year, which intervenes between the time when it is usual to dress or prepare trees, against the period of vegetation; and the next season following, when they put forth their blossoms, and mature their fruits.

The intercession of the gardener is so far crowned with success, that the destruction of the tree, which the owner had apparently resolved on already, is not carried into immediate effect; and the parties in the action of the parable are supposed to separate with the understanding in question, that the dresser of the tree should do his part, if possible more effectually than ever, in behalf of the tree; nature should continue to do her's as before; and the owner both of the tree and of the ground, should be content to wait to see if the tree would be found at last to have done its own. The motive which actuates the gardener in making his proposal, and the owner of the vineyard, in consenting to it, is one and the same; that a final effort may be made to reclaim a tree, which as planted and nurtured to maturity in his own vineyard, and as belonging to a species of garden productions, as useful and valuable in itself as any, it is not to be supposed that either he or his servant would lightly doom to destruction, if there was a chance of preserving and rendering it profitable. The result of the renewed trial to be allowed it, would be, that if it left nothing to hope for after all, in

favour of the amendment of the tree, it would also leave nothing to object to the execution of the sentence against it, at last[i].

i There are a few more observations, which it may be proper to make on the particulars of the above account, before we take our leave of them.

First, as to the supposition of the fig-tree's growing in a vineyard—though vineyards, generally speaking, are appropriated to the culture of the vine, there is no reason why the fig, or any other species of fruit-tree, may not sometimes be found planted along with them also. A vineyard is to all intents and purposes a garden; and in a garden any kind of tree, useful for domestic purposes, may be planted and reared.

Mr. Harmer mentions, iv. 83. ch. viii. obs. cxxx. that Doubdan found a vineyard at Bethlehem, full of olive and fig-trees as well as vines: and that Dr. Chandler, in like manner, met with the fig and the pomegranate in vineyards, along with the vine. Ibid. p. 104. obs. cxxxiv.

Again, as to the three years mentioned in the parable—it would be absurd to suppose that these have any thing to do with the age of the tree before the action in the parable begins: though such a notion has been entertained. The tree must be considered to have arrived at an age when it would be capable of bearing fruit, before the owner could come, in expectation of finding fruit upon it. Yet it is very true, that three years, according to several of the ancient authorities, is the earliest period when fruit-trees attain to their full strength and vigour, and consequently properly begin to yield their fruit. Philo Judæus, ii. 402. 12—28. De Humanitate, where he is commenting on the provision at Leviticus xix. 23—25, relating to the fruits of trees, tells us no fruit-tree attains to its maturity before the fourth year; and that no prudent husbandman will allow his young trees to waste their strength on bearing and ripening their fruit, before that time. Chrysostom, Comm. in Nov Test. vi. 578. C. D. in 2 ad Tim. cap. ii. Hom. v. shews that the vine in particular was not supposed to begin to bear under three years of age; and as to the fig-tree, Pliny, H. N. xvii. 30, 7. extends this period from three years at least, to five years old, at most.

In

The moral of such a representation as this, may therefore be summed up in the two following proposi-

In the Geoponica, x. 45. it is observed, *εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ, ὅτι γηρῶσα ἡ συκῆ πολυφορωτέρα ἐστί.*

In like manner, it is reasonable to suppose that the visit of the owner in the present instance—the object of which is to discover if the tree had produced any fruit—coincides in point of time, with the usual period of gathering the fruits of trees; that is, autumn. The same period of the year is consequently, that which the dresser of the vineyard must be supposed to intend to fix upon, for doing what he proposes, with a view to overcome the barrenness of the tree. Now the pruning of trees, the dressing of vineyards, and the like horticultural operations, as every one knows, are as proper in the autumn as in the spring; and by the writers on these subjects anciently either season is recommended as well as the other.

Optima vinetis satio, quum vere rubenti
Candida venit avis, longis invisa colubris:
Prima vel autumni sub frigora, quum rapidus sol
Nondum hiemem contingit equis, jam præterit æstas.
Virgil. Georg. ii. 319.

Tunc age, vicinæ circumspice, tempora brumæ
Qua ratione geras. aperit quum vinea sepes,
Et portat lectas securus vinitor uvas,
Incipe falce nemus vivasque recidere frondes.
Tunc opus est teneras summatim stringere virgas,
Tunc debes servare comas, dum permanet humor,
Dum viret, et tremulas non excutit Africus umbras.
Calpurnius, Eclog. v. 95.

Pliny, H. N. xvii. 35, 17. specifies three periods, as proper for turning up vineyards with the spade, all in the spring: but he adds; Quidam ita determinant: veterem semel a vindemia ante brumam, quum alii ablaqueare et stercorare satis putant. The Geoponica, v. 35, recommend this same period for the process of treatment necessary to render barren vines productive: *τὴν δὲ θεραπείαν φθινοπώρῳ ποιεῖν εὐκαίρως.* Theophrastus, De Causis Plantarum, iii. 10. observes of the fig-tree in particular: *ἴδιον δέ ἐστι τῆς συκῆς· μόνη γὰρ διακαθαίρεται μικρὸν πρὸ τῆς βλαστήσεως;* which must be sometime in the winter at least.

The

tions. First, to explain the reason, why that which deserved to have been done for the removal of an

The mode of treatment which the dresser of the vineyard proposes to adopt towards the tree, is that of digging about it, and dunging or manuring it. Mr. Harmer, ii. 432, 433. ch. x. obs. xxiii. has a remark from Dandini, that spades are not used in the culture of vineyards in the East; and that instead of delving between the rows of the vines, the ground is ploughed or turned up by oxen. He thence infers that the digging about the tree in the parable, is to be similarly understood of ploughing about it.

But this is very hypercritical. To suppose that a spade was an implement of husbandry never used anciently in a garden or a vineyard in the East, whatever a single modern traveller may have observed of the usages of the same country in his own time, exceeds the bounds of credibility. The proper sense, too, of the term σκάψω in the original, admits of no other meaning than that of digging or delving, with the spade, shovel, or mattock.

The truth is, that digging about the trunks; pruning the roots in particular; and manuring with such and such substances; are exactly the process of treatment, which ancient authorities recommend for the culture of figs and vines. Plin. H. N. xvii. 43: Etiam radices circumcidisse prodest vitium luxuriantium ficorumque, et circumcisis cinerem addidisse. Geoponica, v. 35; χρὴ μέντοι τὴν λίθου εἰς τὸ στέλεχος ἔνθεσιν ποιουμένους, ἀποσκάψαι τὰ περὶ τὴν ῥίζαν—x. 48: κατέχει τὸν καρπὸν ἡ συκῆ, ἐὰν περισκάψας βόθρους περὶ πλειάδας, καὶ ἀμόργην ὕδατι κεράσας, ἐξ ἴσου περιχέῃς τῷ στελέχει—Ibid. 82: πάντα δὲ τὰ δένδρα πλείονα καρπὸν οἴσει, ἐὰν τὰς ῥίζας αὐτῶν περιστερῶν κόπρῳ περιχρίσῃς. Cf. cap. 83.

Lastly, we may observe on the concluding words of the dresser of the vineyard, κἂν μὲν ποιήσῃ καρπόν· εἰ δὲ μή, κ', τ. λ. that the abrupt termination of the preceding clause is a singular beauty, which instead of being retained or improved, is lost or impaired by the supplement of the ellipsis in the version. It arises from a presentiment on the part of the speaker, that a disappointment even of this last and final effort to reclaim the tree, was probably to be expected. To fill up his words by the

unproductive tree, and might justly have been done, immediately, was yet deferred for some time longer. Secondly, to illustrate the final end to which even the suspension of a just and well-merited sentence at the time, is directed; the greater and more undeniable proof both of its justice and of its necessity at last.

We may perceive then, how naturally the annexed parable carries forward and enlarges the moral of the preceding discourse, while it arises out of it, and accords with it in general. The object of that discourse was twofold; to correct the uncharitable judgment which the survivors, whether Jews or Galilæans, had pronounced on the sufferers by the late disaster, and at the same time to repress their unwarrantable presumption on their own innocence or personal worthiness, who had experienced no such calamity, in comparison with theirs, whom the providence of God appeared to have visited so severely—

introduction of the particle, *well*, would not only make them a plenary proposition, which they are not in the original, but would be inconsistent with the train of his thoughts at the time, and destructive of the pathos of the passage; and instead of an ominous and melancholy presage, would convey the expression of a cheerful hope and confidence about the result.

There is a similar ἀποσιώπησις, Exod. xxxii. 32: "Yet now, "if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, "out of the book which thou hast written." So, Daniel iii. 15: "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of ... "all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which "I have made—but if ye worship not," &c.

Such constructions may be observed in the finest classical writers.

Ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ χαίρειν μᾶλλον ἐκβάξει λέγων—
τὸν ἀντίον δὲ τοῖσδ' ἀποστέργω λόγον. Æschyl. Agam. 498.

Thucyd. iii. 3: καὶ ἦν μὲν συμβῇ ἡ πεῖρα—εἰ δὲ μὴ. κ', τ. λ.

by denouncing all, whether surviving or dead, as equally sinners in the sight of God, and equally obnoxious to his justice and severity, unless they repented. No doubt the proper effect of this denunciation would be to alarm the fears of the hearers, and to awaken them to the necessity of immediate repentance, if they would avert the judgment which hung over them. But this judgment being described as something distant, or still to come, the denunciation, which did not foreshew its immediate approach, might seem to leave an opening to present confidence against it, if not to the prospect of possibly escaping from it altogether at last. To obviate this self-delusion, the parable is subjoined in prosecution of the antecedent denunciation; teaching the hearers, symbolically, that they had done sufficient to be amenable to the divine justice immediately, and to deserve destruction immediately; in which case their continued immunity even for some time longer, was entirely due to no desert of their own, but to the patience and long-suffering of God.

Nor is this all. It specifies, moreover, with minute precision, the utmost limits of the period for which even the divine forbearance should be content still to suspend the execution of its judgments—viz. the remaining period of the Christian ministry; a ministry which, after being carried on for three years, would be brought to a close in the fourth. If the event should prove that their impenitence was protracted beyond this period, their reprobation also would be final; and the sentence of their excision, whether immediately to be put into execution or not, would nevertheless become fixed and irreversible.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The supposition of something transacted in, or about, a vineyard, which we see to constitute the subject-matter of the present parable, occurs also in others, belonging to the same class, but coming later in the order of the gospel history. Under these circumstances, whatever might be necessary to the explanation of the principal material images, as borrowed from such a source, and as understood in their parabolic or allegorical sense, though applicable to the present parable, would be equally needful for those which occur hereafter; and perhaps from the greater length and circumstantiality of the details of these last, they may more fitly be reserved for the time of their consideration, than anticipated by a minute exposition at present. I shall confine myself, therefore, to the most general idea of the meaning of such representations, that will suffice for the illustration and comprehension of the history, with which we are engaged.

When the visible church of Christ, then, is regarded as a personal subject, it is commonly represented by the metaphor of a bride, or wife; when it is regarded as a material subject, the metaphor is changed for that of a garden or vineyard. Now, such being the case with the supposed material constitution of the church; when that is described as a vineyard, God or Christ, as the head or master of the church, on the principle of reciprocal relations, is naturally to be described as the lord or owner of a vineyard; his people, who are the members or congregation of the church, with the same consistency, are to be understood by the vines which com-

pose the vineyard; the moral effects and practical consequences of their relation as the people of God, as the members or congregation of his church on earth; such consequences at least as ought to flow from that relation, and to discriminate the people of God by their practical effects upon them; in unison with the same mode of description, will be represented by the fruit of the vines; and the existence or non-existence of such qualities in the professing members of the church, as would lead to corresponding effects in practice, will answer on the same principle to those natural properties and distinctions in the vines, supposed to be planted in the vineyard, which are the cause of their productiveness or their barrenness respectively.

Now these images, or others which are analogous to them, it is observable occur in the present parabolic description. We have mention made of the vineyard; of the owner of the vineyard; of the tree planted in it; and of the fruit, which it was expected to produce. We may infer then, that the vineyard represents the visible church of God, in the second of the capacities before referred to; that the owner of the vineyard, is the God and Lord of the church; and the tree, which is planted in the vineyard, is the people of the Jews, the possessors, at the time when the parable was spoken, of the visible church.

It may, however, be objected that this tree, in the present instance, is not the vine, that is, the species of tree which is commonly planted in a vineyard, and gives name to that kind of garden or plantation; but, instead of it, is the fig-tree. To this objection, I reply, that when the visible church in the abstract, is denoted by a vineyard, its mem-

bers, congregation, or possessors at the time, may be represented by any of the kinds of trees, which whether usually planted in vineyards or not, are yet capable of growing there, and are actually sometimes found to be planted there, in conjunction with the vine. Now this is the case with the fig-tree[k]. The principle of analogy, in fact, renders it but consistent that the sense of the metaphor should admit of being extended to this species of reclaimed or domestic trees; though it is ordinarily restricted to the vine. If the vine is commonly selected as the most appropriate of trees to adumbrate the people of God, and by its relation to a vineyard and its owner, to express that of the people of God to his church and to its head, it was doubtless because of its superior excellence and utility, above all the trees of the garden. Next to the vine in such intrinsic worth and excellence, and consequently next to the vine in dignity and estimation, we must rank the fig-tree. Such at least is the place assigned to it in the beautiful parable of Jotham[l], and such also is the equality of dignity even as compared with the vine itself, which is implied of the fig-tree, in that familiar idiom of the language of scripture, to describe a state of public and private security, and the undisturbed enjoyment of general peace and plenty; when every man is spoken of as sitting under his own vine and his own fig-tree[m].

[k] See the note, at the end of the explanation of the material circumstances, already given.

[l] Judges ix. 7—20.

[m] This description occurs of the state of things in the reign of Solomon, 1 Kings iv. 25: of the peace and plenty promised to the subjects of Hezekiah, by Rabshakeh, in the name of his

Now, when communities in their relative capacity of the congregation of the church of God, are denoted by the metaphor of trees, planted in a garden or a vineyard, the moral effects of that relation are depicted by the fruits of these trees; as the conduct of those who stand in that relation is good, they are represented by fruits which are genuine, or by the productiveness of the tree, in proportion to the advantages of its situation; as it is bad, and inconsistent with the duties of their relation, they are described by fruits which are base and degenerate, or by the barrenness of a tree, whose situation should have rendered it fertile. The causes too of such moral effects, the dispositions by which they are produced or on which they depend, are similarly personated

master Sennacherib, 2 Kings xviii. 31. Isaiah xxxvi. 16: of the peace and security, promised to all nations in the latter days, Micah iv. 4: of the same happy period in the days of the *Branch*, Zechar. iii. 10: and of the temporal happiness and prosperity of the Jews under the reign of Simon Maccabæus, 1 Macc. xiv. 12.

The reason, however, why the fig-tree and not the vine, was the metaphor selected in the parable to describe the people of the Jews, for the time being, in their proper relation to God and his church, may have been purely special in this instance, and subservient to the end of the parabolic allegory generally, which is concealment. With the metaphor of the vine as so employed, the Jews were more familiar, than they were likely to be with that of the fig-tree. It is possible too, that in delivering this allegory at present, our Saviour had an eye to the act of cursing the barren fig-tree hereafter; and therefore purposely accommodated the language of *this* representation to the matter of fact in reference to *that* transaction: speaking of the Jews under the image of the fig-tree here, because the malediction was to be pronounced upon the fig-tree in the same capacity, at the proper period afterwards.

by the natural qualities or tendencies of the trees, into which the goodness or badness of their fruits, the productiveness or sterility which they exhibit, whether according or contrary to what might be expected from their situation, and the advantages they enjoy, must be resolved.

This being the case, as the metaphorical designation borrowed from the properties of trees, or from those of their fruits, may be employed to describe any kind of conduct, supposed to characterise any kind of moral agents, under corresponding circumstances of action; the import of the metaphor in a given instance, that is, the duties whose performance or non-performance is intended by the presence or absence of the fruits, by the fertility or barrenness of the trees in question, as well as the subjects of whom they require to be understood, may be different; and must be determined by the nature of the case. Referred to the specific business of the mission of the Messiah, and the ministry of Jesus Christ—as the personal subjects, denoted by the trees, expected to bear such and such fruits, will be the Jews, so the particular duties, the performance or non-performance of which on the part of the Jews, is intended by the presence or absence of the proper fruits, expected from such trees, will be those duties and those personal qualifications, which would be most requisite to give effect to the ministry of the Messiah, besides being the natural consequences of the relation of those among whom it was discharged, as that of the people of God; viz. the duties of repentance and amendment of life; the qualifications of faith and righteousness.

The relation and office of the dresser of the vine-

yard, in the present instance, are simply those of the dresser of the fig-tree; because, of the whole charge of the vineyard, which might otherwise be supposed committed to him, nothing is specified but the care and cultivation of this one tree. Now the relation and office of the dresser even of the fig-tree, are those of one, who by means of the usual pains and labour bestowed upon trees, has the charge of bringing into action and fostering their vegetative powers; and so far as they require external aid, or depend on human skill and industry for the result, is instrumental also in raising and maturing their fruits. Hence, if the fig-tree as such denotes the Jewish community in the abstract, and if the productiveness of the tree, whether requiring to be assisted, or capable of being facilitated in its proper effects, by external pains and attention, stands for a corresponding moral disposition in the Jews at large, the natural result of which should be a certain practical consequence, exhibited in their conduct and demeanour; the pains and labour bestowed upon the tree, which are the instrumental means from without, of bringing its productiveness into effect, and constitute the proper business of one who has the charge of the tree, will describe the part of any minister of God, by whose labours the Jewish community at large, might be wrought upon to the possession of the disposition in question, and to the production of its natural effects.

If, then, the owner of the vineyard may be considered to represent the Lord and Master of the visible church as at present existing among the Jews, in the abstract—whether it be the Father, or the Son, in his divine capacity—of each of whom

such a relation to that church would equally hold good—the character, relation, and office of the ἀμπελουργὸς, or dresser of the vineyard, who stands to the owner in the stead of his servant, and to the vineyard and the trees within it, in the relation of their keeper, superintendent, and cultivator, considered in the abstract also, would be capable of denoting the character, relation, and office of any divinely commissioned teacher, or messenger from God, the purpose of whose mission should be for the sake of the Jews, and the duties of whose ministry should be discharged among the Jews.

These are an office and character, therefore, which at all periods of the Jewish history, subsequent to the institution of the prophetical order, would have suited to the relation and ministry of any prophet of the old dispensation, whose office it was to preach repentance and a change of life, to those to whom he was sent; (which is in fact, a correct description of the office of the prophets in general;) and to recall the people from the open disregard of their original covenant, to a better observance of it, and a more faithful compliance with the will of God, for the future. And if the office of our Lord himself, during the continuance of his personal ministry, was analogous to that of the prophets of the ancient dispensation, and was directed to similar purposes in general; the same kind of description which would have been accommodated to the nature and functions of their ministry, would be equally well adapted to those of his.

Nor, supposing even this to be the case, should it appear extraordinary that our Lord, who uniformly speaks of himself as sent by the Father; as having

a work to perform, a commission to discharge, which the Father had given him; as coming not to do his own will in any thing, but in all respects, the will of him that sent him; should nevertheless describe himself in this parable, by the humble and menial capacity of the dresser of his Father's vineyard. Christ, says St. Paul [n], though preexisting in the form of God, and consequently equal to God, thought it not a thing to be greedily caught at, a desirable privilege, to appear in the capacity of God, and as the equal of the Father, upon earth: but made himself of no reputation, emptied himself of the Godhead, and took upon him the likeness of a servant, as the character in which to appear, and to be personally estimated, accordingly.

If the Father, as the Lord of the church, must be designated by such a title, borrowed from the relations of human masters, as the owner of a vineyard —his Son, as his messenger and servant, in his proper place and ministry, must be represented in a capacity subordinate, yet conformable, to this; which could be only the capacity of the labourer in his vineyard, the dresser or keeper of his vines. With respect to the images, applied in scripture to the Deity, the distinctions of great or little, of dignified or low, must not be determined exactly by our conceptions of them. The most exalted notions which we could borrow from things around us, to transfer to him, would fall infinitely short of his real dignity; and on the same principle, the most common or familiar, which are not absolutely derogatory to it in themselves, can detract nothing from it. The same metaphorical language in which our Saviour here speaks

[n] Philipp. ii. 6—8.

of himself, and of his own personal office, he will be found to apply hereafter to the Father also. "I am "the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. "Every branch in me (as the vine—that is, every "mere professing believer) that beareth not fruit, he "taketh it away; and every branch that beareth "fruit, (that is, every true believer,) he cleanseth (or "pruneth) it, that it may bring forth more fruit [o]."

I take it for granted, therefore, that under the circumstances of the case, we should not be mistaken, much less be guilty of disparaging the dignity of our Saviour's office, if we considered the character and relation of the keeper of the vineyard in the parable, to be intended for those of our Saviour himself, in the discharge of the proper work of his ministry. Yet this character and relation are not necessarily to be restricted to his, nor even primarily to be understood of his, except so far as the character and relation even of our Saviour individually, agree to a still more general character and relation, which would suit to others, under the same circumstances, as well as to him.

In explanation of this assertion, I must remind the reader of what I endeavoured to prove in a dissertation of my former work, upon the ministry of John the Baptist—concerning the identity of the end and design of his personal office with those of our Lord's, and the subserviency of them both in their proper order of time, to the common purposes of what I then characterised by way of distinction, as the ministration of the Messiah, or the ministration of the kingdom [p]. It appeared from that discussion,

[o] John xv. 1, 2.

[p] Vol. ii. Diss. v. p. 147—184.

that though in point of time John was the predecessor, and Jesus the successor, yet in the nature and functions of their ministry respectively, there was no difference whatever between them. They never laboured, except for a very short time, (and perhaps, strictly speaking, not even for that,) in conjunction: but they both laboured, one after the other, in the same vocation, and for the same object.

As soon as the providence of God had removed the Baptist from the stage of public life, (which was within six weeks after the first passover,) our Saviour stepped into his place; and with no conceivable loss of time, by an immediate return into Galilee, and the commencement of his ministry there, took up the discharge of his office, and even the language of his preaching; so that, though the workman was changed, it was evident to all that the continuity of the work was unbroken. The same business was resumed by Jesus Christ, which had been necessarily abandoned by John; and the same work was completed in due time, by the former, which had been prematurely left unfinished by the latter.

The common character and relation of both, it was shewn, were those of the heralds of the future kingdom; the common business which each discharged, in his proper place and order of time, was that of proclaiming the tidings or gospel of the kingdom, in the first place, and of inculcating the practical consequences, deducible from its futurity and the expectation of its arrival, in the next; the substance of both their preaching and teaching, being expressed in this one sentence, "Repent ye! for the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." They were preachers of the kingdom—that is, heralds of the approaching

gospel dispensation—in their first and proper capacity; and they were teachers of repentance, in a capacity subordinate to that, but intimately connected with it; because repentance, reformation, and change of life alone could prepare even those, whom their preaching had induced to believe in the futurity of the approaching dispensation, for admission into it, and participation in its privileges; besides being the natural, practical consequences of faith in its annunciation, and of the expectation of its coming.

Now the very circumstance that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were both preachers of repentance and teachers of righteousness to the nation at large, implies the necessity of repentance and reformation to the nation at large. Their proper office then, was that of persons deputed to contend against the national impenitence and wickedness; and by their preaching and teaching, to bring about the national repentance and reformation. Speaking, therefore, in the language of the parable, we may compare the object and effect of their personal labours, to the duty of the keeper of a vineyard, who might have to overcome the sterility or unproductiveness of one or more of the trees, planted in it. They were each employed, one after the other, on a similar purpose, the reclaiming of a barren tree.

The character of the dresser of the vineyard, then, would agree equally well either to John the Baptist, or to our Saviour; and primarily considered, or in the abstract, would be designed to represent none, and could properly correspond to none but that of the instrument employed on the work of the ministration of the kingdom. This instrument was originally the Baptist, and while he was the only instru-

ment as yet employed on the work in question, the abstract character of the dresser of the vineyard of God, belonged to him. The Baptist had now been superseded by our Saviour; and from the time that our Saviour took his place, the same abstract character which had belonged to his predecessor, became appropriated to Jesus Christ.

These preliminary considerations will be found far from irrelevant to the explanation of the other particulars of the parable; on which we must now proceed to enter, in order to its complete interpretation. First, a vineyard, it may be said, was not ordinarily the place in which fig-trees would be found planted; and generally speaking, this observation would be just. If the fig-tree, then, in the present instance had been purposely planted in the vineyard of its owner, one reason may be the peculiar value which he may well be supposed to have set on this species of tree. Nor is mention made of any other kind of tree, as growing in the same locality along with this. The Jews were selected to be the people of God, out of pure favour and kindness to them in particular; and they were established in the exclusive possession of the visible church, with no admixture of any other nation in the same communion, or in the enjoyment of their peculiar privileges, as the chosen family of God.

It would appear to be almost too obvious a circumstance, to be remarked upon, did not the language of the parable direct our attention to it, that the owner had a vineyard, before he had a fig-tree growing there; and that he had a fig-tree growing there, in consequence of his planting one in it. The land of Canaan was selected and set apart for the

future occupation of the children of Israel, long before they were established in possession of it: and the children of Israel were settled in possession of the promised land, before they became as a nation, and as living in a country exclusively their own, the people of God; before the precincts of the land which they occupied, could be called the determinate limits and locality of the visible church on earth.

The necessity of the case requires that even a barren fig-tree, and growing in whatever site, must have attained to its natural vigour and maturity, before its owner could reasonably expect to find fruit upon it, or reasonably be disappointed by the failure of such an expectation. In like manner, neither did the coming of the Messiah take place until the fulness of time; when the people of God, among whom he first appeared, who had long been taught to expect him, ought to have been prepared to receive him. The call of Abraham; the birth of Isaac; the various fortunes of the patriarchs; the dispensation of the law; the ministry of the prophets; the whole course of the Jewish history, religious and civil, were directed to one point, as the consummation of all, the advent of the promised Messiah: for whose appearance and manifestation in due time, a preparation of two thousand years could not but be amply sufficient in itself, and competent to answer the purpose both of raising among his contemporaries the expectation of his coming, and of drawing their attention to the fact of it, as soon as it took place. Accordingly, it is a well ascertained truth, that at the time of the appearance of Jesus Christ, the Jews were prepared to see their Messiah appear, and unanimous in expecting him

at that particular juncture; but neither were so before, nor have been since.

The failure of the expectations of the owner, and the total absence of fruit on the tree, could not be attributed either to the poverty of the soil, in which it grew, or to the want of due care and culture, on the part of the gardener, or to the defect of vigour and maturity in itself; but solely to its rankness and luxuriance of growth. In like manner, when, by the dispensations of the Divine providence, for a series of ages, both the natural and the supernatural—every thing had been done, to pave the way for the manifestation of the Messiah in due time, and to ensure the success of his mission, which properly belonged to God, or could be justly expected by his people—to what cause could the failure of his mission at last, and the disappointment of so much pains and preparation previously, be attributed, except to the blindness, the infatuation, and perversity of the Jews themselves? for whose benefit all had been intended, and in producing whose conversion through the ministry of Jesus Christ, but for their own prejudices, their own obstinacy and impenitence, it must have been successful. God was innocent of the result, and so was his servant the Messiah. His people only, or they unto whom his mission was directed, and among whom his ministry was discharged, were answerable for it—arresting the further progress, and defeating the ultimate effect, of the whole scheme, just when its completion and fulfilment began to depend upon them.

The time of the owner's visits to his vineyard, in any one of the years which he mentions, cannot without a breach of decorum, be supposed any time

at random; but the usual period in every year when the fruits of trees are ripened, and their productiveness or unproductiveness may be clearly ascertained by the event. The season of ingathering among the Jews, for the vine, the olive, the fig, was but a little earlier than the feast of tabernacles, and generally speaking, may be said to have coincided with that solemnity. The action of the parable, which begins at the time when the fruit of the fig-tree was, or should have been, ready to be gathered, begins consequently about the same period. The visit of the owner, to discover whether there was fruit on the tree or not, must therefore have been made at this period, on the first of the occasions which he mentions; and have been repeated ever after at the same time. At the feast of tabernacles it is, as I shewed in my former work, that we must place the probable commencement of the ministry of John the Baptist; the first of the instruments employed on the ministration of the gospel of the kingdom, and the first real character to whom the abstract relation of the dresser of the vineyard, at this period of the Jewish history, could apply.

The visits of the owner, for the purpose of discovering if his tree had borne fruit or not, after they had once been begun, were twice repeated; and on the second of these occasions, which is the third instance of a visit in all, the transaction which constitutes the parable, is supposed to take place. These annual visits of the owner, at the proper season of the year, to judge of the productiveness of his tree, in consequence of the culture and growth of three successive years one after another, express the result of the labours of the instrument in the ministration

of the kingdom, whether John the Baptist or our Saviour, through as many years of his personal ministry; for which it had hitherto been discharging. The disappointment of the owner in discovering no fruit on his tree, at each of these annual visits, answers to the continued ill success of the labours of the instrument in question, in procuring the conversion and repentance of the Jews, notwithstanding their annual repetition. The visits of the owner had now been thrice repeated, and the labours of the instrument at the time of the last feast of tabernacles, had been going on three years. It was agreed, at the time of the third visit of the owner, to prolong the trial of the tree into another year; and the ministry of the instrument, at present employed in promulgating the gospel of the kingdom, when this parable was delivered, had already entered upon the fourth year of that promulgation.

A three years' constant expectation might have sufficed to demonstrate the patience of the owner, and a three years' constant failure of fruit, the sterility of the tree. The long-suffering of God, after bearing with the continued infidelity and impenitence of the Jews, for three years successively, notwithstanding all the pains and exertions both of John the Baptist and of our Lord, to bring about their conversion and repentance, might be considered to have been sufficiently attested; and had the ministration of the kingdom been terminated at the end of its third year, instead of being prolonged into its fourth, still enough would have been done for the trial of the Jews, and for the proof of their invincible obstinacy, and determined perseverance in unbelief.

Hence, had the tree been immediately rooted up,

as barren and unprofitable, the justice and necessity of such a proceeding could not reasonably have been called in question: and had the doom of the Jews, upon the present and the past experience of the national impenitence, been irrevocably sealed at the end of the third year's ministration of the kingdom, the grounds of such a sentence would still have been reasonable and just; and its execution, whensoever to be carried into effect, would have been well-merited.

The motive of the owner, in desiring the extirpation of the fig-tree, was not merely to get rid of an useless, unprofitable tree, but to plant something better in its stead; to turn the richness and fertility of the ground, which were rendered unserviceable for their natural purposes by the fault of the tree, at present growing upon it, to some better and fitter account. Nor was the rejection of the Jews, as the people and the church of God, designed merely as a punishment of *their* infidelity, but with a view to the substitution of the Gentiles in their room; that God might still not be without a church, nor want a proper people of his own, though his church, at present in being, deserved to be repudiated as unworthy of him, and his former people could no longer retain their peculiar relation to himself, without the sacrifice of his attributes of justice, holiness, and truth. And this final end is assigned by our Saviour himself, for the substitution of the Gentile, instead of the Jew, as the church and people of God; that the former might render in their due season, those fruits of righteousness which had in vain been looked for, from the latter.

That a longer period of growth even in his own

vineyard, was granted to the fig-tree, nevertheless, must be resolved ultimately, into the kindness of the owner himself, and the still lingering feeling of regard that he may be supposed to have cherished for a favourite though unworthy tree, which he himself had once planted; but immediately, into the effect of the intercession of the dresser of the vineyard in its behalf. Now, if the character of the dresser denotes our Saviour, it is singularly consistent with that relation in him, that *he* is described as interceding with the owner of the vineyard, denoting the Father, in favour even of the unbelieving and impenitent Jews; and *his* intercession as attended with success. And if the owner of the vineyard is the God of Israel, it is not surprising that his love of his ancient and still his peculiar people, should easily incline his mercy to grant them every indulgence, to shew them every forbearance, which might be compatible with his justice.

The intercession even of the gardener, is accompanied by a stipulation affecting himself and the discharge of his own duties towards, and in behalf of, the tree; on which he promises to bestow additional pains and culture, if by that means it might yet be rendered productive: and though we cannot infer from the fact of such a stipulation, that it had not experienced an *adequate* degree of attention from him heretofore, we are authorized to conclude from it, that it should receive still more hereafter. In like manner, if it cannot be denied that the activity of our Saviour, in the discharge of his proper ministerial duties, was always indefatigable, and at every period of their duration, always as considerable as the necessity of the case required—still it is

not less indisputable that the last six months of his ministry, before the fourth passover, were, if possible, more industriously and laboriously employed than any part of its continuance before. The gospel history will shew, that he must have wrought more miracles; and spoken more parables; and delivered more sermons; and preached in more places; and addressed greater numbers and varieties of persons; within this period, than in any similar length of time, before it.

With regard, indeed, to the fact of increased zeal and diligence, on his part, during these last six months, for the conversion of the native Jews, those of Judæa or Jerusalem in particular; St. John's Gospel alone would teach us, that he did more with that view, in this interval of time, he exposed himself to greater risks for the accomplishment of that one object, than he had ever done before. I endeavoured to prove in the eighth dissertation, part first, of the second volume of my former work, that there is no reason to suppose our Lord was employed on his ministry either in Jerusalem, or elsewhere in Judæa, upon any occasion of which the evangelists, especially St. John, have given us no account: which being admitted, it follows that at no part of the preceding duration of his ministry, had he attended any feast in Jerusalem, but that of the passover, nor consequently been present there more than once in the year, at the utmost; and that for the entire period of eighteen months between the second feast of the passover, and the third feast of tabernacles, he had never been there, nor elsewhere in Judæa, at all.

It is not less certain that, beginning with the

feast of tabernacles, he attended regularly at every feast, which fell out in the last six months of his ministry; the feast of tabernacles, the feast of dedication, and the feast of the passover. His miracles and his discourses on the two former of these occasions, are abundantly attested by St. John—in other words, his efforts for the conversion of the Jews, as then made; besides the account of an intermediate visit to Jerusalem, signalized by a miracle the most illustrious of all which he ever performed, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, which the same evangelist records: while his discourses and actions at the last occasion of his attendance at Jerusalem, are related by each of the evangelists more or less in common.

With what danger to his personal safety these visits were made, and these efforts for the conversion of his countrymen of Judæa took place, appears from the fact that on each of the former occasions he was obliged to save his life by miracle, or was compelled to retire prematurely from Jerusalem; and on the last he suffered. The gospel history shews also, that for the interval between the third passover and the third feast of tabernacles, our Saviour so far from courting publicity in his actions or movements, was altogether studious of privacy and concealment; and spent his time at a distance not only from Judæa and Jerusalem, but even from Capernaum, and those parts of Galilee, which he had before been most accustomed to frequent[q]. The remarkable change in his conduct, which begins to appear with the arrival of the last

[q] See Diss. viii. p. 3. vol. ii. of my former work.

feast of tabernacles, the proofs of a final effort, by renewed and redoubled exertions on his own part, to bring about the conversion of the Jews, if still possible, or to leave their obstinacy and impenitence, if persevered in, without excuse—which continue from that time down to the close of his ministry, six months afterwards; are a very striking instance of agreement between the parabolic history, and the matter of fact adumbrated by it: and clearly ascertain this concluding period of the Christian ministry, beginning when it did and ending when it did, to be that further term of trial, which after three years' experience of the unproductiveness of the barren tree, was still to be extended to it; and the first of that series of visits to Jerusalem, which took place during this interval, to be the commencement of those reiterated personal exertions, which the gardener had undertaken to make, for producing, if possible, a change in the constitution and habits of the tree.

The final end of the further period of trial conceded to the fig-tree, may be considered to imply a threefold design and purpose; one, in respect of the tree itself; another, in respect of the gardener, who had the charge of it; and the third, in respect of the owner of the vineyard, who was both the proprietor of the one, and the master of the other. As far as concerned the tree itself, should this extension of its term of probation produce no change in it, it would place the proof of its barrenness and degeneracy beyond a question; as far as regarded the dresser of the vineyard, should his stipulated part be duly performed, it would acquit him of all blame for the result; and with respect to the

owner, under both these circumstances, should he exterminate the tree, as alone in fault, and absolve his servant, as no way responsible for the event, it would leave nothing to object to the justice and impartiality of his behaviour towards either. In like manner, if the doom of the Jews to utter rejection and to consequent destruction, had been already deserved by their past conduct, yet was still suspended, in order to give our Saviour a last opportunity, by renewed exertions in the discharge of his ministerial labours, to bring about their conversion, if yet possible; the failure of this experiment too, should such prove to be the event, would answer the same purposes, in demonstrating their impenitence to be incurable—his own diligence, zeal, and activity to have been adequate for the conversion of any but an invincibly impenitent people, that is, for the production of any but an impossible effect—and the justice of the sentence by which they should finally be given up to punishment—as alone to blame for the disappointment of his efforts, and the failure of their own conversion—to be beyond a question.

And as to the result to be expected even from this trial—the experience of former years rendered it but too probable beforehand, that the effect of a longer probation, however designed in kindness and forbearance to the tree, would be merely an aggravation of its guilt and an increase of disappointment to its owner. Hence, the diffidence of tone and manner, with which the gardener spoke of the probability that the tree would be found to be changed for the better, even when every thing should have been done, which he himself proposed to do, in its behalf. "And should it have

" produced fruit—but if not—." In like manner, the continued impenitence of the Jews, after the incessant efforts of a three years' ministry to produce their conversion, not only rendered them worthy of immediate punishment, had it pleased God to inflict it upon them, but rendered it morally, if not absolutely impossible, that any prorogation of the period of their final rejection, and any endeavours that might still be made to avert it, however much they might add to their guilt, and therefore to the severity of their punishment, would be effectual to preserve them ultimately from the Divine vengeance, by bringing them to repentance and amendment.

If then, when the period of this further trial was elapsed, the fig-tree should be found neither to have yielded fruit, nor, what would amount to the same thing, to be giving symptoms of the formation of fruit; it was clearly to be expected that the intentions of the owner to deal with it as barren and useless, and no longer to be tolerated in its present condition, conceived as they were even at this period of its history, and only for a time suspended, should at length be carried into effect. Yet the parable is silent about the success of the final experiment, and therefore about its consequences; nor can there be any doubt that this silence is intentional. It does not continue the narrative beyond the point of time where the dresser of the vineyard is left interceding with the owner of it—to spare the tree a little longer, on condition of trying himself one last effort to reclaim it—neither to tell us that the owner consented to this proposal; nor that the gardener did his part; nor that the tree continued notwithstand-

ing as unproductive as ever; nor that it was consequently rooted up and destroyed at last; though it may leave all this to implication, as plainly as if it had expressly stated it.

When we consider, indeed, that the gardener denotes our Saviour himself; that the gardener's intercession for the tree is virtually *his* for the people of the Jews; the gardener's renewed exertions to reclaim the tree, are virtually *his* to recover the Jews; that the further trial of the tree is the further probation of the Jews, and this probation was still current when the parable was delivered; we shall perhaps conclude that there was more propriety, under the circumstances of the case, in the omission of these particulars, than there would have been in their being mentioned. If, however, the proper close of this additional term of probation could be supposed to have arrived—if the condition on which the temporary immunity of the tree had been suspended—that of its still becoming fruitful—had been proved by the event not to have been fulfilled; if a renewed experience had shewn not only that an adequate effort to reclaim it had been made, but that the effort, however adequate, had failed; if nothing, consequently, could now be said, either to extenuate its fault, or to interfere with its punishment: under these circumstances indeed, we might well be surprised, if the sentence originally pronounced against it also, were not seen to be carried into effect.

Now this omission in the details of the further course of the event, which the necessity of the case seems to have produced in the present parable, we may contend is very exactly and critically supplied

by another incident in the Gospel narrative, the curse pronounced on the barren fig-tree; between which act, and the moral import of the present parable, there is so much agreement and analogy, that the one might be considered even at first sight, the continuation and prosecution of the other; and the effect which followed upon the malediction, to be the solemn infliction of the sentence of condemnation on the tree at last, which had virtually been passed on it before; the execution of which, though suspended for a time, was not absolutely remitted, and therefore might still be enforced in due season.

It is the same kind of tree, which is supposed to be the subject of the malediction in both these instances, whether as prospectively meditated, or as actually carried into effect. The malediction is pronounced upon it for the same kind of fault or crime in both instances, the fault of barrenness; the show of leaves instead of fruit. The tree stands symbolically for the same real subject in each instance, the people of the Jews; and its own sterility and unproductiveness in each instance, exemplify merely the infidelity and impenitence of that people. As a judicial or retributive visitation, the effect of the malediction on the type, is either virtually or actually the destruction of an useless and unprofitable tree; and the consequences of the same kind of dispensation with respect to its antitype, the Jews, would be the reprobation and punishment of a nation, no longer worthy to be the people of God.

The most remarkable instance of the agreement between the two things, however, is this; that the sentence of destruction was carried into effect upon the fig-tree, for the crime of barrenness, at last,

at the very time which the parable had fixed beforehand for the execution of the sentence on its own tree also, if no change in its nature for the better was produced meanwhile. A further period of forbearance was allowed to this tree; commencing, indeed, with the time of the year at which the action of the parable was supposed both to begin and to terminate; that is, the season of ingathering—the time by which fig-trees ought to have ripened, and therefore to be ready to yield their fruit; but lasting only so long afterwards, as should suffice to place it beyond a question whether the disposition of the tree, before determining it to barrenness, had been, or was likely to be, corrected by the additional pains and labour bestowed upon it. The request of the dresser of the vineyard was this; "Let "it alone for this year also, until I have dug "about it, and cast *in* dung;" that is, to suffer it to grow undisturbed only until he himself should have done his own part, in taking such measures as were most likely to affect the tree; to stimulate its fertility, to repress its rankness of growth, or to supply it with nourishment, if it needed any. He proceeded afterwards to say, "And should it have produced "fruit"—which further implies that all which he thus proposed to do for the tree, was directed to the single purpose of ascertaining by the result, whether it had yielded fruit; or as his words may very well be construed to mean, whether it was *disposed* to yield fruit, or not.

Now as autumn is the season when trees, which stand in need of such treatment, are ordinarily pruned and manured, so is the spring the time when those who have the care of them, naturally expect

to see the effect which their labours have produced upon them. A tree which puts forth no blossoms, or forms no germs, in spring, will yield no fruit, will bring nothing to perfection, in autumn. The exactness of the material representation in the parable, by which both the beginning and conclusion of this further period of trial for the tree, are so precisely limited not only according to the necessity of the case, and the reason of the thing, as concerns the supposition itself—but in conformity to the event, intended to be signified by it—is worthy of all admiration. The fig-tree was cleansed and pruned and manured in the autumn; and proving still barren, was consigned to destruction in the spring. The additional probation of the Jews, by the prolongation of the ministration of the Messiah, began at the feast of tabernacles, and was brought to a close at the passover next ensuing. Nor is it, perhaps, undeserving of remark, that as the actual malediction of the barren tree did not take place until the last week of our Saviour's ministry, so was it not delayed beyond the first of those days of which his ministry for that week, consisted [r].

From these considerations taken together, I think we may infer, with an high degree of probability, that the act of inflicting a solemn malediction on the barren fig-tree, upon mount Olivet, at that time and in that place, was an intentional prosecution of the moral of the parable before delivered, relating to the immediate ill desert and the probable future treatment of the same kind of tree. If such be the case, it contributes to assign a reason for the exist-

[r] See Harm. P. iv. 65. and Dissert. ii. vol. iii.

ing difference in the narratives of the three evangelists, none of whom has recorded both the preceding parable and the subsequent malediction; but between whose accounts there is this relation and connexion; that the two who record the act of cursing, omit the delivery of the parable, and he who has related the parable, has passed over the malediction.

Now, though the act of pronouncing a curse on a barren tree, like the fig-tree of mount Olivet, might possess both a symbolical and a finite meaning in itself, sufficient to qualify it for standing alone, and to justify either St. Matthew or St. Mark, in recording it as an independent and isolated transaction, yet it will be acknowledged that it was capable of a secret reference to the parable which had formerly been delivered; that the moral of the one might be really associated with that of the other; and that if viewed in connexion with the parable, the act itself becomes more significant and impressive; and assumes the appearance of the execution of a sentence, merely suspended *on* a certain condition, and *until* a certain time—such as was to be expected, when the time should be arrived, and the condition should prove to have failed.

Admit the fact of such a connexion between the two things, in the mind of our Saviour, at least; and we may easily comprehend why St. Luke, writing after St. Matthew and St. Mark, should insert the parable in his narrative, though he omitted the subsequent malediction. The account of this malediction could not be considered absolutely independent of that of the parable; for the final end of the one was involved in the moral of the other. The para-

ble and the malediction were connected almost as cause and effect; the narrative of particulars begun by the one, and carried down to a certain point, might be said to be completed by the other—for an action may carry on a narrative as well as words: the true meaning at least of the subsequent act could not be distinctly recognised, without the knowledge of the parable which had preceded, and the light which that was calculated to reflect upon it. But as the account of the act of the malediction had been already given in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and so far been diffused over the Christian world; all that St. Luke had still to do, was simply to supply what they had omitted—not to repeat what they had already supplied. It is not the practice of this evangelist to relate any thing of the same kind twice himself; nor any thing in his own Gospel, except for special reasons, of which a sufficient account had already been given in the Gospels of his predecessors. Such being his practice—that he records the parable, but omits the malediction, would of itself prove that in his apprehension these two things were intimately united, and that the one was virtually anticipated by the other; nor can it be without design, that his narrative of the proceedings in Passion-week, which accompanies that of St. Matthew and St. Mark before and after the time of this particular incident, stops short of theirs just before this one transaction, and does not go along with them in the account of that event.

When the act of striking the barren fig-tree with a curse, is regarded in this point of view, as connected with the parable of the fig-tree, and as the continuation and effect thereof, it becomes, instead of

a fortuitous or unmeaning circumstance, a very deliberate and solemn transaction. I consider it no objection to such a view of it, that it is attributed primarily to our Saviour's being an hungered at the time, and disappointed by the discovery of nothing but leaves on a tree, whose external appearance seemed to hold out a promise of fruit. These are circumstances of the act itself, external to its inward meaning; and in no wise incompatible with it. Our Lord's actions were never fortuitous. The least, and apparently the most insignificant, part of *his* conduct had, no doubt, a gravity, solemnity, and importance in it, whether visible to others or not, such as to make it worthy of the agent; and even when he might seem to be acting as an ordinary man, yet doubtless he was acting in a manner peculiar to himself. If, then, he might go up to the tree, apparently because he was hungry, as any other person under the same circumstances might have done, in search of fruit; if he might act under the apparent sense of disappointment, towards the tree, as an ordinary person might have acted; still this would not prove that he had not further reasons of his own, in doing what he did, or that he did not intend to make the act subservient to a very different end and purpose, from what seemed to be the first and most obvious cause of the effect.

This further end and design of the act, taken in connexion with the moral of the preceding parable, and as essential, under the circumstances of the case, to the truth and verification of the prophecy virtually contained in it — furnishes the best answer (if any can be supposed necessary) to those objectors, who, from a miserable hostility to every thing

Christian, whether more or less important, apparently, in itself, have demanded a reason, why Jesus Christ (the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, and the consequent Lord and Master of every thing which it contains) should thus have treated an useless, unprofitable tree; the property of no owner, but growing by the side of a public high road: the nature and effect of the treatment itself amounting only to this, that he brought about by a word that change in the vegetable condition of the tree, which natural causes,—a stroke of lightning, a blast of pestilential air, a visitation of locusts, or the like—might at any time have produced, as soon, or nearly as soon, as his word; and do frequently produce, without authorizing or giving occasion to cavils or complaints against any one, on their account.

Should it be objected to the above explanations, that the punishment of the Jews, however expressively adumbrated by the destruction of the fig-tree, was not instantly carried into effect; we may answer, that the question both in the parable and in respect to the malediction, concerns primarily the fate of the fig-tree, considered as the symbol; and secondarily only, that of the Jews, denoted by it. With respect to the former, the punishment of the symbol was instantly carried into effect; for the fig-tree was instantly dried up: and with respect to the latter, the punishment of the type was a sufficient intimation of the punishment of the antitype also, in due time; and the infliction of its proper doom on the tree upon the spot, proved that the punishment of the Jews too, whether immediately to follow or not, was still finally and irrevocably fixed.

If it is objected even to this reply, that a second and a further trial was conceded to the Jews themselves, by the preaching of the apostles, and by the offer of Christianity, after our Lord's personal ministry was over; I answer, that this was no new trial or concession, intended for the benefit of the nation at large, whose infidelity as such, and whose punishment, in consequence of it, were both already certain; but for the sake of confirming or making good the covenant with or unto many, in the language of Daniel ix. 27; that is, of verifying the divine promises to those, whom St. Paul denominates the *election*—that individual portion of the much larger community, or nation of the Jews, by whom the preaching of Christianity, though unsuccessful with the rest, should be received. The numbers of this election were not complete until the time appointed for the days of vengeance, was arrived; that is, until the interval between the day of Pentecost, and the commencement of the Jewish war, was consummated.

These difficulties indeed, are both of them obviated, if we take into consideration the mysterious, yet still possible, union and compatibility between the divine prescience, as extending even to future contingencies, and the freedom of human actions. With such a reference to the divine foreknowledge of events, it is not impossible that a certain consequent, affecting men, may be represented as the result of *one* antecedent, which was notwithstanding the result of *another;* if the two things are connected in their cause or principle respectively, and the futurity of the one may not only be conjectured from the fact of the other, but is even implied in it.

There can be no doubt, that the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews of his time, the treatment he experienced at their hands, and all the circumstances of his ignominious death and passion, were events foreseen and forecast long before. The whole scheme of Christianity proceeds on the supposition that they must, and would, come to pass. It is just as certain, that they were all the effect of secondary causes, the operation of which was contingent, requiring the free and uncontrolled course and agency of ordinary human motives: that the Jews, by whose instrumentality these events were brought about, were deliberate agents even when acting in subordination to the determinate will and counsel of God; and fulfilling the voices of the prophets, read among them every sabbath day: that they are described as free agents, and dealt with accordingly, as responsible for what they had done; as authors of a part which they had advisedly chosen, and might have avoided, if they would.

In like manner, they were equally free in their rejection of Christianity; yet that rejection also was long before contemplated, as an event that must happen; and provision was long before made for the substitution of the Gentiles in the stead of the Jews, on that very account. As they were tried then, previously, by the personal ministry of the Messiah, though it was foreknown that his ministry would terminate only in his rejection, and his crucifixion, by them: so were they tried subsequently by the personal ministry of his apostles, though it was foreseen that their preaching also would end in the nation's rejecting Christianity.

Humanly speaking, indeed, the rejection of the

Christian religion by the Jews, was a necessary consequence of their rejection of Jesus Christ. By that act, they became only the more rooted in unbelief. It was morally impossible, that they who had all along so obstinately resisted, and at last had even crucified our Saviour, should allow themselves to be converted by his apostles; or think of receiving and acknowledging HIM as their Messiah, with the stigma of the cross, in addition to the reproach of the Nazarene, whom they could not away with when alive; though they had daily proofs of his power, and energy, and authority, beyond the measure of the efficiency even of the chiefest of the prophets, and commensurate only to the personal rank and dignity of the Son of God. This moral impediment in the way of the success of their future ministry, considering *among whom* it should be transacted, and *after whose* it should be tried, our Lord himself insists upon to his disciples in these words: "If the world "hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before *it* "*hateth* you. . . . . Remember the word, which I "said to you, There is no servant greater than his "lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also "persecute you: if they have kept my word, they "will also keep your *word*[s]."

The rejection of the Jews by God, as his people, was a necessary consequence of their rejection of his Son, as their Messiah; since it was impossible that they could retain their relation to himself, along with their unbelief in his Son. Yet this rejection might not be final and complete, until the other was so too; the true date of which, the course of events itself proves to have been the commencement of the Jewish

[s] John xv. 18, 20.

war. And this rejection of his ancient people by God, as I before observed, considered as the proper consequent of a proper antecedent, was the effect of their rejection of Christianity. Yet was there no reason, why what was properly to be the consequence of this rejection, might not be represented as the effect of the rejection of the Messiah. Both these antecedents were alike foreknown to God, and both were the proper effect of a cause or principle very much the same, in each instance.

The curse pronounced on the fig-tree was a symbolical act, implying the futurity of a similar malediction on the Jews; and as followed by the effect in the former instance, it was a significant intimation of the certainty of the same kind of retribution, sooner or later, in the latter. The time when, might still be left indefinite; for it is sufficient to know that even *then* the doom of the Jews was sealed in the purposes of the Divine providence, as their ultimate infidelity was already foreknown to the Divine prescience. The interval between the close of our Saviour's ministry, and the actual commencement of the symbolized vengeance, cannot be taken into account in estimating the immensity of the divine views. The instant excision of the Jewish people is not more necessarily predicted by the malediction on the fig-tree, than their instant rejection as the people of God, is by the denunciation of woes, pronounced two days after, and recorded in the twenty-third of St. Matthew's Gospel. Neither of these things can we reconcile in its obvious and primary scope and meaning, with the fact of a longer trial to be conceded, through the preaching of the apostles, to the same people and the same persons, who had

already rendered themselves justly obnoxious to the vengeance of God, by their rejection of Jesus Christ; except by having recourse to the Divine prescience in conjunction with the free agency of men; the former rendering it already known to God that the Jews would reject at last, that which by virtue of the latter, they were still at liberty to accept or to refuse, as they themselves should think fit.

PARABLE SIXTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

LUKE XIV. 15—24. HARMONY, P. IV. 39.

LUKE xiv. 15—24.

15 And one of those, that were sitting at meat with him, having heard these things, said unto him, "Blessed *shall he be,* "who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." 16 And he said unto him, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many. "17 And at the hour of the supper, he sent his servant to say "to them who had been bidden, Come; because all things are "now ready. 18 And they began with one *accord* to excuse "themselves all. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, "and I must needs (I have a necessity to) go forth and see it; "I pray thee (ask thee) have me excused. 19 And another "said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to prove "them: I pray thee (ask thee) have me excused. 20 And "another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot "come. 21 And that servant, when he was come *to him,* "brought word to his lord of these things. Then the master of "the house, being angered, said to his servant, Go forth quickly "into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the "poor and maimed and lame and blind. 22 And the servant "said, Sir, it is done as thou hast commanded, and there is still "room. 23 And the lord said to the servant, Go forth into the "highways and fences, and constrain *them* to come in, that my "house may be filled: 24 for I say unto you, None of those "men, who have been bidden, shall taste of my supper."

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE account of the parable, on the consideration of which we are about to enter, is part of the nar-

rative of what passed when our Lord was invited to eat bread on the sabbath-day, by one of the rulers of the Pharisees, and was sitting at meat in his house. The first thing which took place on that occasion was the miraculous cure of a dropsical patient[a]; the next, a rebuke, addressed by our Lord to the pride and vanity of the guests, which were displayed at the time, in their eagerness to get possession of the principal seats at table; a rebuke, inculcating not only a lesson of humility, but a rule of good manners; the third, an admonition directed to his host, and through him to all such as the providence of God has blessed with ability, what selection to make of the objects of their hospitality, as fittest and meetest, and in the hope of what return, as most consistent with the true spirit of benevolence and a wish to do good disinterestedly, to give those entertainments which the affluence of the rich in particular enables them to furnish.

The parable itself is more immediately connected with this part of the proceedings in question, than with any thing else, which had occurred before it. The last words of our Lord suggested an observation to one of the company present, which he addressed to Jesus: and the parable, which follows, was pronounced in answer to that observation.

It would therefore be an obvious remark, that the introduction of such a parable as the present, at this particular juncture, possesses a remarkable appositeness to the circumstances both of the time and of the place; and strikingly illustrates that well-known characteristic of our Lord's mode of teaching; his habitual practice of either borrowing

[a] Luke xiv. 1—6. Harm. P. iv. 38.

the topics of his discourses from the occasion, or accommodating them to it. The very first parable of all that we have hitherto considered, the parable of the sower, exemplified in an eminent manner the same peculiarity; and we shall see it illustrated also, in others of the number which will come under examination hereafter. I know not, however, whether it is so characteristic of any either before or after this time, as of this; of which not only the occasion in general, but even the form and matter in particular, appear to have been derived from the circumstances of the moment. Jesus was sitting at meat, when he conceived and delivered an history, the groundwork of which is the fact of a banquet or entertainment. Some observer had just before described the beatitude of such as should be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, under the particular phrase of eating bread therein. If this idea was figuratively designed by the speaker, our Lord took up and prosecuted the figure, expanding it into the form and dimensions of a circumstantial allegory; if literally, he gave it a figurative and parabolic application, enlarging and dilating upon it, as before.

The substance of the discourse, which immediately preceded the parable, was considered and explained by me on a former occasion [b]; which renders it unnecessary to dwell upon it at present. I shall proceed, therefore, without delay, to the material circumstances of the parable.

First, then, the basis of the material history, the supposition on which the whole narrative of particular details, in the present instance, proceeds, is

[b] General Introduction, chapter xii. part i. p. 178—181.

the fact of some banquet or entertainment; and as this supposition is necessarily to be understood in conformity to the customs of antiquity, with regard to both the kinds, and the times of the different meals which it was usual to make in the course of the same day—the nature of the banquet itself, which the parable describes as a great one, could not with propriety have been specified by the name of any other meal, than that which is known to have been among the ancients, particularly in the East, the principal meal of all, the concluding repast of the day; the proper name of which is a supper.

Now, as the fact of any entertainment implies both some person *by* whom, and other persons *to* whom, it is supposed to be given, the parties concerned in the history of such a transaction will necessarily be twofold; related indeed to each other in a proper manner; but by the nature of the relation itself, distinguished into principal and subordinate. The principal person is he, *by* whom the banquet is made or provided; whose relative character is consequently that of the master of a feast: the subordinate are they, *for* whom it is made and provided; whose character in relation to that of the master of the feast is consequently, that of his κεκλημένοι, his bidden ones, or his guests.

Again; the reason of the thing, as well as the customs of antiquity, requiring not only that the first design of every such solemnity as a banquet, in point of time, should precede its actual celebration, but that a preliminary invitation of the parties intended to partake in the celebration, should accompany the first formation of the design; the words at the outset of the narrative, "A certain

" man made, *or* had made, a great supper," must necessarily be understood of his *first* conceiving the idea of such a supper; and those which follow, " and bade, *or* had bidden, many," of his acting agreeably to such an intention, by the invitation of guests accordingly; but both, in an order of time prior to the actual consummation of the banquet.

Again, with respect to the fact of such an invitation, as given beforehand—it is indifferent whether we suppose the invitation to have been conveyed at first, to the persons for whom it was intended, by the personal agency of the principal party, or through that of any others, employed to make it in his stead. Yet the former is perhaps as probable as the latter; and if it is reasonable to presume that a greater honour was conferred on the subordinate parties, and the kind intentions of the principal personage towards them were more clearly intimated by his personal condescension, in taking the trouble to invite them to his future feast himself; their fault in subsequently slighting his offer, and defeating the object of his civility, will proportionably be the more aggravated also.

The parties thus prospectively invited, and for ought which appears to the contrary, personally invited by the master of the feast, we may call by way of distinction from any others who may be afterwards mentioned, the guests of the first order. Of these in particular it will be evident, that as they had received a previous invitation, before the time of the solemnity was arrived, so were they under a previous engagement to attend at the feast, when it did. The fact that a message was sent to these persons at the proper hour of the supper, announc-

ing simply that all things were ready, and bidding them, consequently, to come; implies that they had given a promise to come, and required only to be reminded of it; they knew that their attendance would be expected *some* time, though they might not know the exact time *when*. Nor would they be called οἱ κεκλημένοι, "those who had been bidden," at the very time when they received this summons, had they not already accepted an invitation, and been placed in the capacity of guests, prospectively if not actually, before the arrival of the period of the solemnity. The excuses too, which it appears from the narrative, they began to urge on receiving the notice to attend, are the excuses of men who sought to evade the obligation of a promise previously given, and not to apologize for declining an act of civility, for the first time offered. They are excuses, at least, which had never been thought of before, and certainly could not have been made before, because founded in reasons which had arisen subsequently to the formation of a certain engagement, and if urged at all, in extenuation of its not being fulfilled, must be urged on the spur of the moment.

The guests of this first order will consequently stand discriminated from every other kind or succession of guests, which the course of events in such a transaction as the celebration of a banquet, may further bring into notice, in two respects; one of them concerning their common or relative capacity, as guests; the other, their individual or personal character, as moral agents. These only, in opposition to all others, could have received a previous invitation to attend; and these only, by having accepted of it, could be called beforehand

"they that were bidden;" and these only for the same reason, could be said to have entered into a previous covenant to attend, and therefore, to be bound by a moral obligation, consisting in the force of a personal contract or promise, to do so. These alone, then, in default of their attendance at last, could be said to be guilty of a specific moral offence—the breach of a prior engagement, deliberately formed; the evasion and disappointment of a promise previously made, and always acknowledged to be just and due.

Again, the practice of ancient times, if not the necessity of the case, requiring that when the preliminaries to the celebration of a banquet were over, and the presence of the guests alone was wanting in order that the solemnity might begin, a second invitation should be dispatched to the parties expected, to apprise them of this fact, and to request their attendance—if the narrative from that point of time in the course of proceedings, descended into particulars, it must recognise as necessary the agency of another class of subordinate personages, for the purpose of carrying this part of the œconomy into effect[c]. Such persons the reason of the thing would

[c] The fact of this custom, among the Jews of old, may be collected from various passages of the Old Testament. Thus 1 Sam. ix. 13: "As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall "straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to "eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he "doth bless the sacrifice; *and* afterwards they eat that be "bidden."—Zephan. i. 7: "For the Lord hath prepared a sa-"crifice, he hath bid his guests." Cf. 1 Kings i. 25: Prov. ix. 1—5: which shew that it was usual to bid to the feast, when every thing was now ready; in other words on the same day.

Philo Judæus, i. 18. l. 19. De Mundi Opificio: καθάπερ οὖν

require to be the servants or household dependants of the principal party; who besides his relative character as referred to the guests, must possess another as referred to his own household; and as he would stand to the guests invited in the relation of their host, or entertainer at the feast, so would he to the members of his family in that of their lord, or of the master of the house.

οἱ ἑστιάτορες οὐ πρότερον ἐπὶ δεῖπνον καλοῦσιν, ἢ τὰ πρὸς εὐωχίαν πάντα εὐτρεπίσαι, κ', τ. λ. Plutarch, Brutus 34. in his account of the reconciliation of Brutus and Cassius, after their quarrel, adds; καὶ Κασσίου δεῖπνον παρέχοντος, ἐκάλει τοὺς φίλους Βροῦτος: which must have been on the same day—Sueton. Claudius, 39, 3: Multos ex iis, quos capite damnaverat, postero statim die, et in convivium, et ad aleæ lusum admoneri jussit, et quasi morarentur, ut somniculosos per nuntium increpuit. Cf. Dio. lx. 4: which also illustrates the usage of the times in the same respect. We have an instance of an invitation, given and received *ex tempore*, Hor. Epp. 1. vii. 69. sqq.

Lucian, i. 669. De Mercede conductis, 14: ἄρξομαι δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου δείπνου, ἣν δοκῇ, ὅ σε εἰκὸς δειπνήσειν τὰ προτέλεια τῆς μελλούσης ξυνουσίας. εὐθὺς οὖν πρόσεισι παραγγέλλων τις ἥκειν ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον, οὐκ ἀνομίλητος οἰκέτης, κ', τ. λ.—11. 713. Somnium seu Gallus. 7: ὅτι μὲν οὐκ οἰκόσιτος ἦν χθὲς, οἶσθα: Εὐκράτης γάρ με ὁ πλούσιος ἐντυχὼν ἐν ἀγορᾷ, λουσάμενον ἥκειν ἐκέλευε τὴν ὥραν ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον—iii. 263. Navigium seu Vota, 22: Εἰ δέ τις πένης, οἷος ἦν ἐγὼ πρὸ τοῦ θησαυροῦ, φιλοφρονήσομαι τοῦτον, καὶ λουσάμενον ἥκειν κελεύσω τὴν ὥραν ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον.

In like manner the guests at the Symposium of Xenophon, were got together on the spur of the moment. See i. 3.

Harmer, iii. 193. ch. iv. obs. lvi. recounts from Hasselquist a custom, which that traveller was witness to in Egypt; viz. a number of women's going about inviting people to a banquet, in a singular, and probably very ancient manner, which he proceeds to describe. The peculiarity of the usage consisted in the invitation's being made by a number at once, and those women, not men; and in the notice being indiscriminate, or open to all. It illustrates the proverbs of Solomon, as well as the parables of the New Testament.

The agency of this new order of persons is, accordingly, now introduced; and their proper business, in conformity to the nature of the occasion which requires their services, is seen to be that of mediating between the author of the entertainment on the one hand, and the parties designed to partake in his feast on the other; whether those who had been originally invited, or any others distinct from them. It follows, therefore, that the relative or official character of this class of persons, whether its individual members were more or fewer in number, was still the same. They must all have stood in the same relation of servants to their common master; and all have discharged the same common duty of his messengers, to his several guests.

Though, then, only one servant or one messenger is actually mentioned in the parable, yet it is not improbable that on the various errands, supposed to be discharged in the course of the transaction, more than one were actually employed. The use of the singular number in speaking of the agency of such persons, may be intended to denote not an individual servant of a certain class, but an individual class of servants, among many more which the same household must have contained [d]; and a further reason for the use of the singular might be, that however many individuals belonging to this class might have been employed on the present occasion,

[d] It is well known, that among the other descriptions of slaves anciently, there was one class, whose business it was to bid guests, or to carry invitations and bring back answers, and nothing else; called from their duty, κλήτορες or *vocatores*, that is, *bidders*. See Sueton. Caius, 39, 3—Seneca, i. 147. De Ira, iii. 37, 3—Plin. H. N. xxxv. 36. 14—Plutarch. viii. 34. De Garrulitate.

the business in which they were all concerned, was substantially still the same.

The truth of this supposition, in fact, appears to be confirmed by the terms in which the narrative is concluded: "For I say unto you, None of those "men, who have been bidden, shall taste of my "supper." This declaration proceeds from the master of the house, and author of the feast; whose words, though begun as if addressed to one of his servants, are concluded as if directed to many more. To suppose that these last words were spoken by our Lord in his own person, and addressed to those about him, would be purely gratuitous, and inconsistent with the context. But if they were no independent remark or observation of his, spoken by him in his individual capacity, they must have been a continuation of the rest of the narrative, delivered in his historical capacity for the time, of the relater of the words and actions of the agents in the parable. If so, this concluding declaration must be considered a part of the last speech, attributed to the master in the parable, as much as what immediately precedes it; and therefore the persons to whom this final assurance was addressed, that none of the men, at first invited, should taste of the supper, must be the same to whom the second message was previously delivered, to go forth into the highways and the hedges or fences, in search of guests. And as this last assurance was delivered as to more than one, and so far to a body of men, the previous message, and consequently each of the messages before it, must have been given to more than one, and been executed by more than one. The servant employed in the parable is, therefore, not an individual servant,

but an individual class of servants, in the household belonging to the master of the house.

Now, while the narrative affirms the fact of the design of such an entertainment as this, and describes the preparations for carrying it into effect, both as begun and completed; yet it neither describes nor implies the fact of its celebration itself: whence, we may infer, that it could not have come within the scope of the moral which it had in view from the first, that the history should include the solemnization of the festivity of which it speaks; nor in fact, the final effect of any thing but what, at the utmost, though possibly posterior to the formation of the design, was still prior to its execution. The material transaction, then, of which it proposed to give the account, could be neither the business of making or providing for the supper, in the first instance, nor of concluding or celebrating it at last; but something between the two, and equally connected with both; posterior to, and perhaps arising out of the one, yet prior to, and probably necessary to the other.

Again; after relating with a brevity too remarkable not to have been intentional, the first formation of the design, and the preparations preliminary to carrying into effect the celebration, of the festivity, the history enters into details from the point of time when these preparations were over, and all things were now ready; the precise moment of which is determined and specified by the actual summons of the guests, before invited, to come to the solemnity. The moral of the narrative is consequently to be sought for in the nature, intent, and effect of those

transactions which are seen to begin and to proceed, from this period in particular.

Now, when the preliminary requisites to the execution of a design like this were so far advanced, that the day appointed for the celebration of the supper was arrived; the invitation of the guests intended to partake of the festivity, had both been given and accepted beforehand; all the necessary preparations, depending on the master of the house, as one of the two parties concerned in the celebrity, had been duly made and completed; if the consummation of the design by the further progress of events, was arrested at this point of time, it must be by means of some unforeseen and unexpected impediment: which impediment, under such circumstances, it is scarcely possible could be any thing but the sudden defect of the guests, at first invited, and until this moment, always expected to attend. The detail of particulars begins with such an impediment, as produced by such a cause: and therefore the moral of the history must be sought for in the substance of this detail, or in the account of what is described to be done, in consequence of the rise of such an impediment; and therefore posterior to the fact of it.

Now the occurrence of such an impediment at such a juncture, being necessarily an unlooked-for event, the causes which produced it, however adequate to the effect, must have been something singular and peculiar also: and as such, they might require to be particularly specified. And again, the first or direct effect of such an impediment being the total absence of guests at a time when they could least

be spared, and were most naturally to have been expected; if the ceremony was still to proceed—if the original design and purpose of such a thing as the entertainment itself, were not to be abandoned altogether, including the miscarriage of the pains, expense, and trouble, bestowed on its preparation, and the disappointment of the kind intentions of the maker and provider of the feast, as meant for *some* to partake in—the necessity of a new and extraordinary provision, to supply the want of guests, and to be made upon the spot, follows of course. The details of the parable then, from this point of time, might naturally be expected to turn on these two particulars; the developement of the causes, which were of sufficient avail to produce all at once a default of personal attendance on the part of guests originally invited, and up to the moment of the celebration of the festivity, always expected to attend; and the statement of the expedients adopted, in consequence of this default, for the assemblage of other guests, not before invited, to be substituted in their stead, with as little delay as possible.

Now, when the guests of the first order, that is, the guests before invited, received the summons to attend, that is, were reminded of their preexisting engagement, at the hour of the feast; we are told they began to excuse themselves: whence it follows, that they had not excused themselves before; nor consequently had thought of excusing themselves before. We may presume, then, that until the proper time for the fulfilment of their engagement was arrived, and they were actually called upon to keep their word, they were not ignorant of its existence, nor unwilling as yet to acknowledge its obligation.

Hence, as the fact of their excusing themselves at all, proves that there was some difficulty, either real or supposed, in the way of the performance of their promise; so their excusing themselves at this juncture, but not earlier, implies that the difficulty was something which then for the first time began to be discovered and felt, when they should have fulfilled their engagement. And as the fact of their thus excusing themselves is affirmed without exception of all, as made or as beginning to be made, at the time, (ἀπὸ μιᾶς sc. γνώμης,) "with one accord," or one impulse by all—it follows that the difficulty was something which lay, or was supposed to lie, equally in the way of all, and occurred alike spontaneously at the time, if not before, to all.

Now this difficulty appears from the history to have been the interference of some other business with the performance of their previous engagement; some business more pressing or personally interesting, as it seemed, to the parties bound by that engagement—at the conjuncture when they ought to have redeemed their word, by attending to the summons of the master of the feast. This business consequently, they urge, or would be understood to urge, as an excuse of sufficient strength to release them from an existing obligation, without an open violation of good faith. Admitting, therefore, the fact of their own engagement to attend—and the right of the master to expect their attendance—at his supper; they plead the impossibility of its performance under existing circumstances, and trust or would desire to be allowed to trust, to his equitable construction of the emergency, for the validity of the plea. One had purchased a field, and must go that night to visit and

inspect it; another had bought five yoke of oxen, and was obliged to go to prove them [e]; a third had married a wife, and therefore could not come.

The delicacy of the parable in putting into the mouths of persons, supposed to be guilty of the breach of a preexisting and acknowledged contract, excuses so plausible as these, will readily be admitted. It is manifest, however, that fair and reasonable as they may appear, they resolve themselves after all into a secret dislike of the occasion, which requires their attendance elsewhere; and a personal disinclination to give up or postpone any business of their own, to submit to any sacrifice of their own time, self-interest, or self-gratification, for the sake of keeping their word with the master of the feast. For not to object, that we have only the assurance of each individual himself, to vouch for the reality of the excuse which he urges in his own behalf; not to argue, that being under the bond of a promise to attend a summons from their host, which was to be expected at this very time, they ought to have kept themselves on purpose free from every engagement, which might have interfered with the immediate obedience due to it—what was there in any of the grounds of exemption which they put

[e] If a modern reader should be inclined to imagine there is any thing improbable in the supposition of a person's using five yoke of oxen in a plough at a time, I will mention, that according to 1 Kings xix. 19. Elisha was found by Elijah ploughing with *twelve* yoke of oxen; and that Josephus, Ant. Jud. xii. iv. 6. speaks of Hyrcanus, the youngest son of Joseph, the nephew of the high priest Onias for the time being, as sent, upon one occasion, by his father, two days' journey into the wilderness, with *three hundred* yoke of oxen, to ear the ground, and to sow corn, there.

forward, of so very urgent a nature, that it must be construed into a peremptory and indispensable avocation? that it would not have admitted of delay, or with any colour of propriety was entitled to take precedence of the discharge of a stipulated part; the observance of a solemn, preexisting covenant, the fact of which even they themselves do not attempt to gainsay.

One had bought a field—which being consequently now his own for any length of time, might just as well have been visited the next day, as that very night. Another had stocked his farm with oxen; after the purchase of which it was indifferent *when* he proved or ascertained their quality; it would not make them better to try them that same evening, nor worse, to put off the experiment until the next morning. A third had wedded a wife; who being his for the rest of his life, might surely have been left to herself for a single evening. This last excuse, indeed, though the least satisfactory of all, is urged nevertheless with the greatest effrontery, and the least ceremony of all. For, whereas the two former, with a stronger and more specious reason of exemption to plead, yet preferred it in each instance, with an appearance of diffidence, and something like a modest request that it might be deemed available; the third does no more than barely announce the fact of his present situation, and assign the consequent impossibility arising from it, of attending to any but one thing—the part of a new-married husband towards a wife—whether with or without a previous engagement to the contrary; "I have married a wife, and therefore I can-" not come."

Again, when it is considered that the supper, as designed at first, and as provided for on a corresponding scale of preparation, is styled a *great* one; we may conclude that the number of guests invited must have been proportionably large also. Yet though they are *all* said, on receiving the same summons to attend, to have begun with one accord to excuse themselves; the excuses of *three* only out of the whole number, are actually on record. Unless then the number of guests originally invited was no more than three, it follows that the three, whose excuses are particularly mentioned, stand as the representatives of the entire body of guests, each of them being equivalent to a distinct class; and that the kind of excuses made by and recorded of these three, are instances, or specimens of the excuses returned by the whole body.

And it is observable, that though all these excuses are more or less insufficient and unsatisfactory, yet there is something special, and reducible to a different principle of action, or motive of conduct, in each one of them, compared with the rest. The purchase of a field or estate, and the implied necessity of surveying it, is a different thing from the provision of oxen for a farm, and the need or expediency of trying them; while the marriage of a wife, and the duty of conjugal attendance at home, are something distinct from both. Nor, perhaps, shall we be going too far, if we attempt to draw this distinction between these several motives and their effects; that the acquisition of wealth, and the satisfaction of seeing and possessing it, are at the bottom of the first refusal; the cares of business, the anxiety produced by the ordinary employments and

concerns of life, are the cause of the second; uxorious intemperance, which is one of the pleasures of sense in general, is the motive which actuates the last.

Now the default of the guests, originally invited, and until this time always expected to attend, being unjustifiable in itself, because contrary to an existing engagement, and grounded on pretences the weakness of which it was easy to discover; implying therefore a personal disinclination on their part to keep their faith with the master of the feast, or a mean opinion of the honour, distinction, or gratification to be derived from sitting at his table, in comparison with any business or pleasure of their own; and on these accounts being a direct affront to the master, as well as a direct violation of their own promise; it could not fail to excite his indignation: and occurring as it did so critically, when all things were ready, and the banquet ought to have begun, it could be repaired by prompt and speedy measures only, if a new supply of guests, not before thought necessary, was all at once to be provided. Hence, the particular mention of the displeasure of the master on the one hand, as naturally produced by the report of his servants, returning from their errand to his guests—and the command which is immediately given them, on the other, to go out quickly upon a second mission, in consequence of the failure of the first. The measures which follow, then, upon the refusal of the guests of the first order to come to the feast, are dictated partly by a just resentment on the part of their author, at so undeserved a reception of his offered civilities by those for whom they were originally

intended, and partly by the necessity of the case, as the only expedient left to retrieve the consequences of their rejection of his invitation, by transferring the option of it to others.

For if the design of celebrating the supper, as originally projected, was still to proceed, it was absolutely necessary that the invitation to partake of it, which had now been declined by those to whom it was first offered, should be tendered to others in their stead. The only question, which could create any further difficulty, would be, unto whom; that is, where the master of the feast must look for persons, distinct from the guests originally invited, who would accept of that offer, if made to them, which had been rejected by the former. Now the guests originally invited, must stand distinguished from all beside themselves, not only in having been personally invited, and personally being engaged to attend at the solemnity, beforehand, which none else could be; but also, as the reason of the thing would render it probable, if the circumstances of the narrative, directly after, did not place it beyond a question, in being the townsmen of the master of the feast, and his acquaintance, his associates, and something like his equals in rank or fortune. They were men of substance and consequence in his city, as well as he; they were the masters of families, the owners of lands, and the possessors of property as well as he: and they must have been his acquaintances and associates, to be invited to his house and table at all.

Moreover, since the projected solemnity was large and sumptuous, and the number of guests invited for the occasion must have been proportionable to

the magnitude of the entertainment, it may not unreasonably be presumed that the guests of the first order would include *all* the fellow-citizens of the master of the feast, as such, or all the individuals belonging to the same community with himself, who might be considered in any respect his equals, and so far on a par with him, as to be his acquaintance and associates; especially as this supposition is far from inconsistent with the usages of ancient times, both in the magnificence of such entertainments as were of a public kind, and in the numbers and description of the guests, invited to them[f]. If this was the case—as the treatment which he had just experienced from the guests of this class, and the

[f] Among the λειτουργίαι incumbent on the rich citizens of Athens, in the time of their republic, one was the ἑστίασις, or duty of entertaining publicly the respective tribes, &c. consequently many thousands at a time, at one individual's expense.

Cornelius Nepos records of Cimon, cap. iv: Quotidie sic cœna ei coquebatur, ut quos invocatos vidisset in foro, omnes devocaret.

Athenæus in his Deipnosophistæ has many minute accounts of entertainments given to immense numbers of guests at one time, and on a corresponding scale of magnificence: and public as well as private history, in ancient times, if it were worth while to produce the instances, would supply numerous examples of whole communities treated or feasted by single individuals, at once.

U. C. 684. Marcus Crassus entertained the free population of the city of Rome upon ten thousand tables; Plut. Crassus, 12: Cæsar, at his triumph, U. C. 708. entertained them at twenty-two thousand tables; Plut. Cæsar, 55: and U. C. 680. Lucullus, on his return from Asia, distributed among the people, at once, one hundred thousand cadi of Chian wine; not less than six hundred thousand sextarii, or about three hundred thousand quarts of our measure. Plin. H. N. xiv. 17.

plain intimation they had thereby given him of their personal disposition towards himself, and of the little store they were inclined to set by his friendship or his civilities, would naturally induce him, and indeed compel him to transfer the invitation, rejected by them, to others, by whom it might perhaps be received; so with regard to the peculiar relations of such persons to himself, or the peculiar character of their external circumstances, he could have no alternative left except to make the offer of becoming his guests, to persons whose situation in all respects, must have been *a priori* the reverse of that of the guests originally invited. If the same overture was to be transferred to any distinct from the first, it must be to strangers and unknown, instead of fellow-townsmen and acquaintances; it must be to poor and destitute, instead of rich and independent. Such an œconomy in the selection of the parties who next receive the invitation, the history proceeds to describe as carried into effect.

Now if the privilege of partaking in a celebrity like the proposed entertainment, was a privilege of any dignity or value in itself, and therefore at all desirable on its own account; the transfer of the invitation to the supper, and with it the privilege of partaking therein, from the guests of the first order to those of any other, could not fail to be a certain degree of punishment, inflicted on them; and of punishment too, which as the proper consequence of a proper offence, would have much the nature of a retributive dispensation, the effect whereof was to resent in kind the very offence which had provoked it, consisting in the denial to them of the same good at last, by the act of another, the possession of which

they had not been willing to secure previously, when it depended upon themselves. The transfer of it, too, to persons the reverse of themselves in relation to the master of the feast, or in external circumstances—to strangers, instead of acquaintances, to inferiors, instead of equals, to mean and indigent, instead of noble and wealthy—would be an aggravation of this punishment, because an aggravation of the disgrace redounding to the subjects of it. It would be a plainer intimation of the resentment of the master of the feast; a more decisive proof that his former friends had lost their place in his favour; and a more marked expression of his censure and reprobation of their conduct.

Yet whether it was a punishment or not, and to whatever degree it was capable of answering the purpose of a penal retribution unto the guests of the first order in particular, the transfer of their invitation to others, with the consequent loss by them of the privilege attached to its acceptance, was a measure for the cause and effect of which, as originating in the wilful dereliction of their own engagement, they were themselves alone to blame. Nor does it follow, that because the fact of such a transfer might sustain the character, or produce the effect of a penal dispensation in respect of one class of persons, it might not serve as an instance of pure favour, and bear the construction of a gratuitous act of kindness, in respect of another. The personal punishment of the guests of the first order consisted in the loss of the privilege of partaking in the master's supper unto *themselves*, not in its being communicated to *others;* and though it could not have been transferred to others without being taken away from

them, yet it might have been lost to them, and still not have been transferred to others: and it would have been just as much an act of retribution upon *them*, notwithstanding. But the offer of the same privilege to others, which was at first intended for them, would be the consequence of that freedom of choice which the author of every proposed benefit or act of kindness, is at liberty to exercise, both in the manner of dispensing his favours, and in the selection of the objects on whom to bestow them. The master of an entertainment is the only person who can give the invitation to partake of it; and in making choice of his guests he may observe what rule he pleases. The œconomy therefore which begins, and continues from this point of time, consisting in the alienation of their peculiar privilege from the guests of the first order, and in its transfer to others, might be an act of just resentment and a well merited instance of severity, towards the former; but, under the circumstances of the case, it must still be considered an act of simple kindness and condescension, in behalf of the latter.

Nor is this all. The same act which transfers the invitation, and with it the privilege of partaking in the supper, from one order of guests to another, amounts to an absolute conveyal of it away from the one, and a permanent assurance of it unto the other. From the moment that the offer of the original invitation begins to be proposed to guests of any other order, it is irrecoverably lost to those of the first; and from the moment it has been accepted by the former, it becomes theirs, and is confirmed to them, as inalienably their own, ever after.

The design of the new dispensation is to *reple-*

nish the banquet room with guests, from other quarters and of other descriptions, than those who were first invited: and when that design should once have been accomplished, the chamber of course would be *full*, and there would be neither occasion nor room for more. The place then, which might once have been reserved for the former guests, being now occupied and filled up by others, could no longer be recoverable, nor capable of being again filled by them. The proposed substitution therefore of a new order of guests has in view the total exclusion of the old; and the penal consequences of the transfer of the invitation, once theirs, to others who before did not possess it, are meant to be unto them, final and irreversible. If they have lost any good thereby, it is a good which they can never recover; if they have incurred any evil by it, it is an evil which they can no longer escape from. Even the opportunity of repentance, had they committed a fault, and become conscious of it directly after; or the reparation of an error of conduct, had they been betrayed into an act of imprudence, and would have taken timely steps to retrieve it—seem both to be precluded by the turn and course of things, which begin and proceed from the moment of their first refusal. Not only when the feast should have been fully supplied with its new order of guests, but even when the first steps should have been taken to provide that supply—the recovery of their former relation becomes impossible to the guests of the old; their original privilege is forfeited for ever. The necessities of the banquet chamber, however great they might be, and however long before they were adequately supplied, must be furnished by a provi-

sion of totally *new* guests, to the *entire* exclusion of the *old.*

That such is the motive which actuates the new dispensation, and such are the personal consequences to the guests of the first order, proposed by its execution, appears plainly from the rest of the account. For, first, the resolution of the master to transfer his invitation, and with it the privilege of being his guests, to persons of a description the most opposite to the former, having once been formed, and the necessity of the case being urgent, his servants are sent out first of all into the streets and lanes of the city; as places which could not fail both to furnish objects answering to the description in question, and with as little delay as possible, because they lay near at hand, and were capable of being speedily visited and explored.

The order which commands the servants to go forth on this errand, specifies the kind of persons also whom they were to bring in, the poor, and maimed, and lame, and blind [g]; a commission, which

[g] Mr. Harmer, ii. 125, 126. ch. vi. obs. xlviii. refers to Dr. Pococke, to shew that the supposition in the parable, of bringing in the poor, &c. to partake of the entertainment in question, is still matter of fact, where feasts are given by the great or the rich in the East. No doubt he refers to this authority under the idea that the supposition in the parable is to be literally understood, and that what is at present done in the East, under such circumstances, was always done there. But this may very well be questioned. The Koran requires such acts of charity and munificence to the poor and impotent, from Mahommedans at present, as the Bible does from Christians. But by what law were they required of the people of the East, before the promulgation of Christianity? or by what usage was the custom sanctioned there? It might be the case perhaps among the Jews;

being general and unrestricted, implies that their instructions extended to all of the description in question, to whom they could apply, and whom the streets and lanes of the city could furnish, or they themselves should be able to meet with there; and not merely to a part of them. Now persons to be sought for and found under such circumstances as these, however mean and indigent, or even miserable, in their bodily condition or their worldly fortunes they might be, might yet be natives, and certainly would be inhabitants, of the city, in whose streets and lanes they were to be discovered; and consequently they might be fellow-townsmen of the master of the feast in particular, as well as the guests whom he had first invited. The first effect then of the new dispensation would be to substitute in the relation of guests to the master of the feast, an order of persons who differed from the old, not as the natives or inhabitants of other cities must have differed from fellow-citizens or fellow-townsmen of their host, but as strangers would differ from acquaintances—as those who were fit to be a person's associates, would differ from those who were not; and certainly as persons the most inferior in rank and fortune, and in all the circumstances which discriminate the possible varieties of men's

though even that is doubtful, considering that our Saviour himself, on the very occasion when he delivered the parable, laid it down as a rule of proceeding to his audience, who consisted of Jews, that they should invite to their feasts, the poor, and strangers to themselves, not the rich, or their own neighbours, and the like; a rule which we may well presume would appear novel to them, as what they had never heard inculcated, nor had been accustomed to practise before.

outward estate, would differ from those who were most superior in the same.

That this order was duly executed appears from the report of the servants, to whom its performance was intrusted, "Sir, it is done as thou hast com- "manded." Now the command had prescribed the bringing in of all whom the streets and ways of the city should be found to furnish, answering to the description of bodily or external circumstances, which was to regulate the choice of objects. If, then, this injunction had been performed accordingly, we must conclude that every individual of that description had been brought in, whom the servants had been able to find within the precincts of the city itself. But their master is told at the same time, that there was "still room;" in other words, that the supply of guests of such and such a kind, which the city alone had been able to furnish, whether more or less in itself, was inadequate to the want; the banquet was not yet provided with a number sufficient to partake of it; nor the chamber so fully replenished with guests, but that there was room and accommodation for more.

It must be obvious then, that the final end which the master had in view, when he issued the command transferring his invitation to a new order of guests, and which his servants, employed on its execution, understood him also to have in view, was not merely a provision of new guests, from some quarter or other, instead of the old, but in sufficient numbers to fill his room, and to allow his banquet to begin to the exclusion of the old [h]. The streets

[h] The word γεμίζω, used in the original to specify this kind of replenishing, implies the same thing; for γεμίζω, like μεστόω,

of his own city were ordered to be first explored, because they lay nearest at hand, and therefore were the first to present themselves; and because, whether they could furnish the whole or not, they could not fail to furnish part at least, of the new supply in question.

If, however, the banquet was projected originally on the same scale of grandeur and magnificence, which we have supposed; and if the number of the guests for whom it was first intended, comprehended *all* the inhabitants of the city, of a rank in life and a degree of external fortune above absolute indigence and dependence, which we have also supposed—it is not surprising that when the invitation was transferred to the rest of its inhabitants, who in bodily or external circumstances were the reverse of the former, the number of guests of that description which the city might be competent to furnish, should still be less than the necessity of the case required. The first provision, then, for the supply of new guests being discovered to be incomplete, some other effort was to be made for the same purpose, to give effect even to the former. But the regions *within* the city had been already explored; the research therefore, if continued, must be prosecuted in the parts *beyond* its precincts. Hence, the repetition of the order of the master to his servants, to go forth a second time unto the highways and fences, and to collect such guests as might be found there. The

is more specific than πληρόω simply would have been; and denotes the filling or replenishing any thing, to the utmost bounds of its content or capacity. It is properly used of the lading of a ship to the just degree of her burden, or of what she is able to carry.

effect of this command would be the introduction of a *third* order of guests, or at least an extension and enlargement of the *second*.

Now, as the terms of the commission thus repeated contain an express command to bring in, just as much as before, and for the same purpose, that the house of the master might be filled, and his table supplied with guests, as much as before; but not an express description of the kind of persons to be brought in, as the order did before; we must conclude that the objects of the search, or the sort of persons, intended to be discovered and brought in, in the capacity of guests, as the effect of this second errand, is the same as before; which having been once specified already, did not require to be specified again. If so, the parties included in the scope of this commission also, that is, the guests of the third order—in point of bodily privations, or external circumstances, would be the same with those of the second; and therefore, in all such respects, just as much opposed to the guests of the first order, as they were.

But they would not be the same as the guests of the second order, in respect to the place of their abode, or at least to the places where each were to be sought for and discovered, respectively. The latter were to be sought for within the precincts of the city, in its alleys, its streets, its lanes; the former, in the parts beyond and without it; the highroads, conducting in every direction from it or towards it, the fences or hedges, which bounded those highways, and separated them from places not appropriated to the passing and repassing of travellers.

It appears, then, that the guests of the third order are distinguished from those of the second, (and still more from those of the first,) if not in bodily or worldly circumstances, yet in remoteness of locality and distance of situation, entailing a peculiarity of relation to the common master of the feast, which would have less of the ties or connexion of neighbourhood in their instance, than in that of the former. For though both orders of persons would be his guests in common, yet the one might be aliens, the other countrymen; the one would be no inhabitants of his city, the other his fellow-townsmen. Nor is this all; for though the personal description of the poor, the destitute, the impotent, might apply to the guests of both these orders in general, yet the guests of the third order would be somewhat worse off, even in such characteristic circumstances of their common situation, than those of the second: and so far would be a particular class of the same kind of persons in general. They who live in cities, however humble their rank or forlorn their condition, may yet possess advantages, denied to those, who, equally mean and indigent, have no habitation but the highways, no shelter or lodging but the walls and fences [i].

[i] The assumption on which this reasoning proceeds, that the description of persons, intended to be brought in upon this second mission, must be the same as before, in opposition to those at first invited, seems only just and reasonable. It is no objection to the above account, therefore, that Mr. Harmer, i. 463. chap. v. Obs. xix. has a quotation from La Roque, to shew that travellers in the East will often stop on purpose, under the shade of *trees*, outside of towns or villages; and that persons, desirous of exercising hospitality towards such strangers, will frequently send to those places, and invite them thence.

Travellers

Now, there are certain circumstances of distinction connected with this second order, and serving to discriminate it from the first, which require to be pointed out: as first, being given in continuation of the former, it must be supposed to carry on the same purpose as that; being the last which is given, it must be supposed to complete the purpose, not fully accomplished by the former. And if this purpose was the provision of guests in such numbers as to fill the supper-chamber, from the very nature of this second commission it could not fail to be completed by its execution. The streets of a city can enclose only a finite space, and consequently comprehend a determinate number of persons; but the highways and parts beyond it, being of indefinite extent, are capable of supplying an indefinite multitude. The servants were commanded to continue their researches in these quarters, and to extend them there, so long as it should be necessary, until the supply of guests was complete; and though this might be a work of time, it must still be accomplished at last.

Again, the persons included in the scope of this last commission, might be strangers as such, and strangers of every clime; all equally opposed to natives of the country, or inhabitants of the city of their host, provided they answered to the description of poor, infirm, and destitute. It is implied too, that

Travellers do this, according to La Roque, when they wish to go on their journey again as soon as possible. Mr. Harmer thinks the guests found on the *highways* were strangers passing on without any intention of stopping; and those, under the hedges, such as had declared an aversion, indeed, to stay, but had just sate down a moment to take a little refreshment. I can perceive no ground for this distinction, in the parable.

the business of bringing them in is a task of greater difficulty than that of bringing in the former: not however so much from the greater toil or labour of the research, as from the greater reluctance of the parties themselves, who were to be brought in, in this instance, than in the former. There was no mention of constraint of any kind as likely to be necessary to the success of the invitation with the guests of the second order; but there is an allusion to some such necessity, for the same purpose, in behalf of those of the second. "Go forth into the highways, "and fences, and constrain *them* to come in."

It would be absurd, however, to suppose that this constraining is to be understood of compulsion by force or violence, and not simply, by the power of entreaty, persuasion, importunity, and the like; whence it may be inferred that the reluctance, which it proposed to overcome, must have arisen not from the personal disinclination of the parties addressed by the offer, to accept of the offer itself, but from some natural and venial impediment to its reception, occasioned by their peculiar situation at the time when they received it. The guests of the second order might be poor and needy, as well as those of the third; yet being natives of the same city as their host; acquainted previously with his name, his rank, and his character; and perhaps partakers heretofore of his bounty; *they* might be predisposed to accept his invitation, as soon as made to them. But the guests of the third order, who besides being poor and indigent in themselves, were strangers also to the master of the feast, might be deterred for a time by surprise, or shame, or diffidence, from acceding to so unexpected an overture—so full of ho-

nour to them, and of condescension on the part of its author—from one unknown to themselves, and greatly their superior in rank and consequence; and for the removal of these obstacles to the acceptance of his invitation, might stand in need of encouragement, entreaty, and even importunity, from those who were employed to convey it.

Again, the issuing of this last order is clearly asserted, and its execution is as plainly implied to begin, as that of the first; but the effect of its execution is not represented to take place within the period of time, and the detail of circumstances embraced by the history; as that of the first was. The true reason of this omission may appear hereafter. Meanwhile, it is an obvious remark, that a command extending to the exploration of the highways, leading from the city in every direction, that is, to places widely remote from the supposed scene of the parabolic transaction—is a different thing from one, confined to its streets and lanes, that is, to regions contiguous, and on the spot. The latter might be speedily executed in comparison of the former: and we should as naturally expect to see it carried into effect and completed, as given and begun. But the former would require a longer time; and therefore could not with so much propriety have been described as executed, as well as enjoined.

Besides, had the execution of this second order been represented by the narrative as actually completed; the effect of that execution, in the assemblage of a sufficient number of guests to render it improper for the solemnity itself any longer to be delayed, would have required the detail of the transaction to have proceeded, in the due course of things, to

the account of its celebration. But, as we have seen, it did not enter into the scope of the history from the first, to give any account of this part of the proceedings; so that the conclusion of the previous œconomy, which though finite in itself was yet only preparatory to that consummation, might with reason be left to conjecture; and the thread of the narrative be suspended just where that œconomy is supposed to end.

Finally; the effect immediately proposed by each of these commissions, which was only implied by the first, is distinctly affirmed of the second, in the words of the command to go forth into the highways and hedges, and to constrain those who should be found there to come in; followed by the reason assigned, that the house or banquet chamber of the master of the supper, might be filled. But that this also was directed to a further purpose, viz. the total exclusion of the guests at first invited, by the substitution of an entirely new order of persons, sufficiently numerous to occupy and fill the place before intended for them, appears from the declaration which follows last of all, "For I say unto you, None of "those men, who have been bidden, shall taste of my "supper." Hence, as the consequence of collecting new guests, wheresoever they were to be found, notwithstanding the default of the old, would still be to supply the necessities of the supper, and to fill or replenish the house; so the effect of replenishing it with guests entirely new, would be that neither could room be left, nor admission be possible, any longer for the old; the privilege of guests, the distinction of being invited to the supper, as friends and associates of the master of the feast, the pleasures of

the banquet and the enjoyment of his hospitality itself, must for ever be lost unto those for whom they were first intended—and have become the right of others. A full house and a ready furnished table would needs exclude all, who were not previously received into the one, or already sat down at the other.

Hence, though the parable itself, which contains the entire account of this transaction, may properly be called the parable of the great supper in general; yet as the celebration of the supper is not seen to be consummated within the extent and period of its action, it ought, perhaps, in strictness to be denominated the parable of the provision of guests *preparatory* to the great supper—or that of the *transfer* of the invitation to become guests, with the consequent transfer of the privilege of partaking as guests, in such a solemnity as the celebration of a great supper, from one class of persons to another. Therefore, though the guests of the first order only could properly be called, "They that were bidden;" as having been originally invited to attend *before* the time, and being originally pledged by their promise to attend *at* the time—yet the guests of all the orders, however much they may differ from one another in some respects, agree in this one circumstance, that none of them is actually a partaker in the banquet, but all of them are only prospectively designed to be so.

We observe too, that the ministry of the same persons is employed all through the transaction; both in repeating the original invitation to those before engaged to attend, and on the failure of the notification with them, in transferring the invitation to others. But as the several errands on which they

were sent, were successive, not simultaneous, they are not only distinct things in themselves, but constitute so many stages in the progress of the transaction; and may be so many eras, as we shall see hereafter, in the real history adumbrated by the parabolic. No doubt, the intervals between each of these errands must have been of determinate length; and very possibly that between the first and the second might be the same in extent as that between the second and the third: but the interval between the third and the implied period of the conclusion of the transaction, which the parable itself left unfinished, it is manifest, would be more indefinite, and much greater in comparison than either of the other two periods can justly be supposed to have been.

The joint import then of the train and tissue of particulars in the parable taken together, is plainly this; to shew by what means it came to pass that one class of persons, the fittest beforehand to be the possessors of a valuable and desirable privilege, adumbrated by an invitation, entailing a right, to participate in the solemnity of a splendid and magnificent supper, and the very persons to whom it had been actually offered, and by whom it had been accepted, and unto whom, on the equitable condition of their personal concurrence with the kind intentions of the master of the feast, of their just estimation of his favours and civilities, and of the performance of their own engagement, it would have continued to belong—having by their own fault rendered themselves unworthy of it—their privilege was transferred to others, the reverse of them in external circumstances and in personal relation to the master of the feast; and the most unlikely *a priori*

either to have expected, or to have received, the offer and enjoyment of his civilities, instead of those for whom they were first intended.

It turns, therefore, on the exhibition of this anomaly—which though not to have been anticipated beforehand, yet being an anomaly of conduct, must still be resolvable into the usual moral motives which influence the conduct of men in general—why they, to whom an invitation of this kind had been previously given, and who, by having accepted of it, were under a previous engagement to attend at the proper time of the solemnity, when that period arrived should spontaneously have failed of their word: and they, to whom no such invitation had ever been given, and who were under the bond of no promise to attend upon the summons should spontaneously have accepted the offer of it, as soon as made.

The guests of the second and the third orders, respectively, had given no promise to come to the supper, before the time, like those of the first; and therefore could have broken no promise by refusing to come to it, at the time, as those of the first had done. Compliance with the invitation on their part was consequently free, or purely the effect of a grateful sense of the distinction and kindness which were designed to be conferred upon them by it; unenforced at least, by any regard over and above, to the sanctity of their own good faith. Hence as the odium of refusal would have been less on their part, so the merit of acceptance ought to be considered greater, than it would have been on the part of the others; and the willing attention displayed by them to a proposal, which they were free to

have rejected, is contrasted the more strongly with the aversion shewn by the others, to obey a summons, which they were not at liberty to disregard.

And as the acceptance of the same thing is as universal on the one hand as its rejection on the other, there must, we may presume, have been something in it as agreeable to the guests of the two last orders, as offensive and distasteful to those of the first. What this was, must doubtless be sought for in the circumstances of their own situation at the time, combined with the nature of the overture itself. Their own situation was that of poor, and impotent, and destitute, if not of strangers and unknown, as well as houseless and in want. The offer made to them was the offer of food, and clothing, and shelter; of an hospitable entertainment, and a friendly welcome; enhanced too, by coming from one so much their superior, and being pressed upon them of his own accord, with an urgent, importunate vehemence, which though it had for its object their good and not his own, would allow of no denial, and listen to no excuse. An offer made under such circumstances, could not fail to be acceptable; and when the first embarrassment arising from the novelty of their situation, and the consciousness of their own unworthiness to become the subjects of so much honour, and the objects of so much condescension, should once have been removed, we may justly suppose it would be gladly and thankfully embraced.

THE MORAL.

The nature of the occasion which produced this parable, proves it to be one of those that relate to the kingdom of God, or its equivalent designation,

the kingdom of heaven; and what is more, to the mysteries or secret truths, connected with the future history of that kingdom. It is true, no such express comparison to the kingdom of heaven is premised to this, as to many others which possess a similar reference; but as the remark which preceded and produced it, directly concerned the kingdom of God, the parable which replied to that observation, may be reasonably supposed to concern it also.

The author of this observation, who is described simply as one of those that were sitting at meat with our Lord at the time, was much more probably an indifferent person of the company present, than one of our Lord's disciples. There is equal reason to suppose that his observation was immediately produced by the last words of our Lord's previous discourse, relating to entertainments of charity, given to the poor and needy; the return of which could not be made by the subjects of such obligations themselves, but if made at all, must be made by some one else in their stead. If this return, however, was to be made by any one else in their stead, it must be by God, who accepts and rewards all acts of charity done to the poor, as done to himself; and if to be made by God, it must be in another state of being—not in the present life; and if to be made in the life to come, it must be in the resurrection of the just; which may well be supposed the same thing, as to be made in the kingdom of God: and if such returns are to be made in kind then, as entertainments given with a view to be requited in the present life, are returned in kind here, they might be described under the particular image

of eating bread, or sitting at meat, in the kingdom of God.

The observation however, addressed to our Saviour, was a plain, direct remark; the answer which takes it up and replies to it, is couched in the form of a parabolic narrative. This alone would be sufficient to imply, that though the subject of the answer might be the same in general with that of the remark which preceded it, and both might be intimately connected with some truth or other concerning the kingdom of God, yet more was intended to be conveyed by the reply, in reference to this subject, than it would have been advisable to state openly at the time.

Whether the observation in question was designed simply to declare a certain opinion of the speaker; or to ascertain the opinion of our Lord, and to elicit from him some expression either of assent or dissent, in reference to the point in question; the truth of the proposition, Blessed is he, *or* shall be he, who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God—was scarcely to be disputed. But who were they to whom that happiness was to befall? This question is a natural result of the preceding assertion; and in proportion to the greater truth of that assertion in the abstract, the more concerning in practice does the solution of this question become. The greater, the more certain, is the happiness of all who shall enter into the kingdom of God in general; the more important, the more interesting it must be to know for whom that happiness is reserved in particular.

The true decision of this secondary question on the spot, might have forestalled disclosures which at that time would have been premature; and per-

haps not only new and unexpected to the audience of our Lord, but offensive and unpalatable. It may be presumed that the parable was designed to meet this particular difficulty; and admitting to its fullest extent the truth of the original assertion, Blessed shall be he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God—to answer the collateral question arising out of it—so much more interesting in each individual's case—for whom that blessedness was in store, without shocking the existing prejudices of the hearers, or anticipating the effect of future revelations, or even the light which time itself should in the end throw upon its solution.

The historical moral of the narrative, or that which resulted from the joint tendency of its several particulars, was easy to be collected, and has been already stated. Its parabolic or figurative import remains yet to be explained: with which view I shall begin by endeavouring to ascertain the allegorical or parabolic meaning of that which is the foundation of the whole transaction; the image of the supper. The true sense of this fundamental image being once determined, on the principle of analogy it will serve as an easy clue to the interpretation of the rest of the parable.

I observe, then, that the idea of the solemnization of some banquet in general, which there is no reason to suppose may not be a supper in particular, enters either implicitly or actually into other passages in the gospel-narrative of the discourses of our Saviour, before the time of this present parable; which though not strictly parables themselves, yet being figurative or allegorical throughout, partake of the nature of parables, and may fitly be

compared with the most regular parables themselves.

The first of these passages occurs in the account of the miraculous cure of the centurion's servant; the time of which was soon after the beginning of the second year of the ministry of our Lord; and in relating which St. Matthew and St. Luke accompany each other, with no differences either of defect or of supplement in the one narrative as compared with the other, but what are easily to be accounted for[k]. The part to which I refer, occurs only in the narrative of St. Matthew; "And I say "unto you, Many shall come from east and west, "and shall be made to sit down in the kingdom "of heaven, along with Abraham, and Isaac, and "Jacob; but the children of the kingdom shall be "cast forth into the darkness *which is* without: "there shall be weeping, and the gnashing of the "teeth." Matt. viii. 11, 12.

Upon this declaration of our Saviour's, made at such a time and on such an occasion, we may observe first, that the use of the terms "shall be made to sit "down," (ἀνακλιθήσονται,) which describe the attitude of persons, in ancient times, reclining at meat, clearly supposes some entertainment or other, to be going on, or about to begin; which though not designated as a supper, yet there is no reason why we may not understand to be one; and we shall see by and by that it is more agreeable to the other circumstances of the same allusion, to understand it of a supper, than of any meal solemnized earlier in the day.

It follows, therefore, that the parties supposed to

[k] Matt. viii. 5—13: Luke vii. 1—10. Harm. P. iii. 10. Vide Diss. vol. i. Diss. iii. 151—153.

be personally concerned in the celebration of such a solemnity, from the nature of the occasion itself, are concerned in it in the capacity of guests: and as the solemnity itself is described not as prospective or in contemplation merely, but as actually begun or ready to begin, it follows that they who are concerned in it in the capacity of guests, are concerned in it not in the capacity of guests invited, but of guests admitted, to partake in the celebration of the festivity.

Again, the parties who are thus supposed to be actually admitted to partake in the solemnity of the banquet, are described to come from east and west; that is, from quarters of the world the most remote from, and opposite to, each other. Such a designation of individual locality can apply only to the case of Gentiles; and if so, of Gentiles as contradistinguished to Jews: to whom, as involving over and above the opposition in question, we are further justified in applying it, by the occasion of the declaration itself; which was the faith of the centurion, just displayed in so remarkable a manner. That centurion was doubtless a Gentile: yet his faith was pronounced by our Saviour the most eminent instance of the kind, which he had hitherto met with, even in Israel and among the Jews themselves. This strength and activity of faith in a single Gentile, surpassing as it did the utmost measure of the same kind of trust and confidence in the Divine omnipotence, the same kind of knowledge and conviction of the Divine omnipresence, and the same disposition to ascribe both, to their widest extent, to our Lord himself, which a year's experience in his ministry had been able to discover even in the most enlightened and best informed of his countrymen according to the

flesh; might naturally suggest to our Saviour a prophetical declaration, contrasting the future faith which should ultimately be displayed by the Gentiles in general, with the infidelity to be expected to the last from the Jews at large; and the different personal consequences of their distinct personal conduct, to each.

Again, the parties who are supposed in like manner to be excluded from partaking in the same solemnity, to which others are supposed to be admitted, are called the children of the kingdom; a mode of designation which can apply to none but Jews. For whatever be denoted by the kingdom itself, the children of the kingdom is a familiar Hebraism; which being taken from the notion of sons, involves the relation of heirs to the kingdom in question. It describes therefore the personal relation of those to this kingdom, unto whom, out of regard to the rule and method of the transmission of property, or of any thing else which admits of descending from one possessor to another, the right of this kingdom, as entailed by inheritance, would seem to belong. Now these, with respect to the transmission of any promises or privileges, originally made to the patriarchs, must be their natural descendants the Jews. The same conclusion follows on the principle of the opposition which necessarily prevails between the members or component parts of the same complex and description of persons, as mutually excluding each other. For if, out of the whole number, any wise concerned in the solemnity as guests, they who are actually admitted to partake in it are Gentiles, in contradistinction to Jews; the rest, who are actually excluded from

partaking in it, must be Jews, in contradistinction to Gentiles.

Again, both the fact of their participation in the banquet, who have been once admitted, and that of their utter exclusion from partaking in it, who have been denied admittance, are equally supposed to be final and irreversible dispensations. For on the one hand, the secure enjoyment of their privilege is matter of course, where guests who have been previously invited to a feast, have already sat down, or are just on the point of sitting down, at table, in their quality of guests, and the feast itself is either begun, or about to begin without delay; and on the other, the description being referred to the customs of antiquity, by which festivities or banquets, on a large and sumptuous scale, were celebrated in the evening, and therefore were properly *suppers*, the impossibility of their gaining admission, or sharing in the enjoyment of a certain privilege *within*, who have once been excluded into the darkness which is without, becomes self-apparent. And this inference is further confirmed by the terms of the allusion to the feelings or conduct of the persons so circumstanced, "There shall be weeping, and the "gnashing of the teeth:" a description which can apply to nothing but the sensations and demeanour of persons, who are in a state of perpetual exclusion not only from a condition of positive happiness, but into a condition of positive misery, the reverse of it; and who are conscious to themselves of being so. The acts which express their behaviour, under the sense of their situation, are distinct in themselves, yet both alike are the natural consequences of their feelings and circumstances at the time; the concur-

rence of which, as I elsewhere observed, must be resolved into the combined influence of sorrow and despair; of sorrow, arising from the consciousness that a valuable privilege is lost; of despair, as founded in the conviction that the loss is irretrievable, that the recovery of the privilege is hopeless.

Again, the scene or locality, within which the solemnity is supposed to be celebrated, is the kingdom of heaven; and they who are admitted to partake of it there, are described as admitted to partake of it *along with*, that is, by being received *into the company* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It follows, therefore, that whatever be properly denoted by the nature of the solemnity itself; it is something to be transacted in the kingdom of heaven, considered as a determinate and specific *local* residence; something to be transacted in the society, and therefore in the presence, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; something, as having the nature of a social or festive transaction, to be enjoyed and passed by all others who partake in it as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, equally and to the same effect as by them; but something to which all others who are admitted to partake as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are admitted to partake in an order of time, *after* them; to which, on their own admission to partake of it, they find these patriarchs admitted already. Though, then, the actual participation of all the parties in the solemnity may take place at one and the same time, at last, yet the order of succession in which each is admitted respectively, is determined by the order of time. The admission of one part precedes that of another. They who are last admitted find others admitted before them, to

whom by their admission they become united; and those who are first admitted, not only precede all others in the order of admission, but are ready to receive the rest, and to take them into their society, when their turn to be admitted arrives.

Upon the particulars of the above representation, I shall content myself with remarking at present, first, that though the fact of every banquet supposes some one by whom it is given, as well as others to whom it is given; and though the celebration of such a banquet is distinctly recognized in the present instance, and the presence of guests, necessary to take a part in it, is just as clearly certified; still no mention is made of any master of an house, or of any author of the solemnity itself.

Again, the scriptural character and relation of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, being necessarily that of the patriarchs of the old dispensation, and the ancestors of the Jewish community, we may justly presume it to be implied that those who are admitted to partake of a certain festivity within a certain locality, along with these patriarchs, in opposition to those who are excluded from admission, must be admitted as their seed or descendants in some sense, in opposition to those who were not their seed or descendants in the same: and *vice versa:* whence it follows, that if even those who are excluded are described as the natural seed, or lineal descendants of these patriarchs, they who are admitted must be their spiritual; and must be admitted in that capacity[1].

[1] Of the spiritual seed of Abraham, as distinguished from the carnal or natural, see Rom. ii. 28, 29: iv. 11, 12. 16, 17: ix. 6—8—Gal. iii. 7—9. 29: iv. 26—28.

Moreover, since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, besides being the patriarchs of the old dispensation and the founders of the Jewish community, were eminent patterns of faith, and became the chosen objects of the divine promises and blessings themselves, and the vehicles of them to their posterity, by virtue of that faith; it seems only reasonable to conclude that they who are admitted to partake of the peculiar privilege or happiness of these patriarchs in the proper scene of things within which it is transacted, as their true seed—are admitted as the heirs of their *faith;* and as the heirs of their faith are invested with the relation of their true seed itself: while those on the contrary, who are excluded from admission at the same time and place, are excluded as not inheriting the faith of these patriarchs, and therefore whether naturally their descendants or not, as not entitled to the character of their true seed at least.

Again, as the faith even of these patriarchs, which possesses this virtue of determining among their posterity, the inheritors of the relation of their true seed, was still a faith in Christ; it appears to follow that they who are admitted to them in the capacity of their true seed, are still admitted only as the heirs of their faith in Christ; and they who are excluded from admission primarily, as not their true seed, are excluded ultimately, as not the representatives of their faith in Christ. Whence it would appear, that the grounds both of admission to, and of exclusion from, one and the same solemnity, whatever be its nature—and as affecting the proper subjects of either of these dispensations respectively—is the presence or the absence of the same quality of a

faith in Christ. It appears too, that they who possess this quality are Gentiles, and they who want it are Jews: the former of whom, it may be taken for granted, must be Gentiles who lived either at the time when the promulgation of Christianity first took place, or subsequently to that event; though whether the latter are the Jews of our Saviour's own time, or not, does not so distinctly appear.

If we turn, however, to a later passage in which the same material image occurs as the foundation of a similar representation, we shall find both this omission supplied, and each of the above inferences also placed in a clearer and stronger light.

This passage occurs, Luke xiii. 23—30. in answer to the question put to our Lord, "Are they that are "saved, few[m]?" The reply to that interrogation was couched in the following terms; "And he said "unto them; Strive to go in through the narrow "gate; for many, I tell you, will seek to go in, and "will not be able *to do so*. From the *time* that "the master of the house is risen up, and shall "shut to the door, and ye shall begin without, to "stand and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, "open for us; and he shall answer and say to you, "I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye "begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy pre-"sence, and thou hast taught in our streets. And "he will say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye "are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. "There shall be weeping, and the gnashing of the "teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and "Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, "and yourselves thrust (a thrusting) forth without.

[m] Harm. P. iv. 36.

" And they shall come from east and west, and from " north and south, and shall be made to sit down in " the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last " who shall be first, and there are first who shall " be last."

Upon this representation in general, we may observe, that it supposes even more plainly than the former one, the fact of a certain solemnity, like the celebration of a banquet or entertainment of some kind. It commences with an allusion to the narrow gate or passage; the private postern or wicket door; through which the parties invited to such solemnities, in the east—more especially all who were the intimate friends of the principal personages concerned in the celebrity—were wont to be introduced, or privileged to gain admittance [n]. It supposes then the course of preparations for a banquet to be going on, but the consummation of it not yet arrived; before which, admission to the place of its celebration was still possible, but only for a limited time, and in a certain way, and to a particular class of persons. For as by the wicket gate itself, none but the personal friends of the master of the feast could properly be introduced, so after a time even this gate was in danger of being closed against all, though belonging to that number, who might have neglected to take advantage of it while open, and to secure their

[n] Harmer, iii. 329. ch. vi. obs. lxxxix.: it appears from Sir J. Chardin that the houses of the great in Persia are built with a *great* gate or entrance, and a *small*: that *one* entertainment is given at the finishing of the house, when the *great* gate is opened: after that it is shut up, and never opened again. On this principle, the only access to the friends of the owner of the house, upon any occasion that might bring them thither, would be through the *small* gate.

entrance into the house of their host: the signal for closing it being the rising up of the master of the house, to conduct his guests, supposed to be now all assembled, from the apartment where they were at first received by him, to the chamber in which the solemnity itself was to be held.

This banquet or solemnity also, from the circumstances that are disclosed in relation to it, is seen to be one which takes place in the evening; and therefore is properly a supper. The parties concerned in the transaction of it, are here too supposed to stand in the capacity of guests, all of them beforehand invited to partake in the feast, but only some of them admitted at last to the actual participation of it; the rest, excluded from it. The banquet is spoken of previously as simply in the course of preparation; but this course is brought down to the point of time when the master of the house gets up, and by so doing causes the shutting of the door; after which, if any were not yet come, they could not, consistently with the ceremonies observed on such occasions, obtain admission; and the feast, if consummated at all, must be celebrated in the company of those alone, who were already within.

Now, though these suppositions may have a figurative or parabolic meaning, still this must be founded on their literal sense and construction; and in the real matter of fact from which they are taken, that is, the celebration of actual entertainments on a large scale, in the east, with a mixed and indiscriminate attendance of guests—though it could never happen that *all* the parties invited, and consequently expected to attend at the time, through any accident or any fault of their own, would be sure to arrive

too late, and so find themselves shut out; yet it is very possible that in a large company, some of the number always would. The œconomy of the transaction proceeds on the supposition of this probable contingency; and therefore that the same act of the master, in rising up and closing the door, however many it may comprehend within, excludes not a few of the whole body of guests invited, without.

Again; the shutting to of the door which incloses some, and excludes others, of the same complex of guests invited beforehand, being also a signal for the commencement of the feast; by the same act and its consequences, the enjoyment of the privilege of guests is from that moment assured to those within, and its loss is rendered irrecoverable to those without. Participation then in the feast is thenceforward as certain to the one, as exclusion from it is to the other; that is, the consequences of either dispensation to its proper subjects, are here also as final and irreversible, as before. The same personal behaviour, as arising from a similar consciousness of this result, and as the same effect of the mingled emotions both of disappointment and of despair, is consequently here too attributed to the parties excluded, under the same kind of figurative language as before; the use of which by St. Luke in the present instance, is so much the more remarkable, because though it is repeatedly to be met with in St. Matthew, it occurs no where else in St. Luke's Gospel, but here.

Again, the scene or place, in which this solemnity also is supposed to be transacted, being described as the kingdom of God, is the same as before—where it was represented to be the kingdom of heaven. The

parties who are said to be admitted into the locality where the celebration of the solemnity takes place, are here also described as coming from east and west, and in addition to those quarters, from north and south; that is, as Gentiles, and Gentiles of every clime, or from each of the quarters of the habitable world; and consequently of an age and time posterior to the personal ministry of our Lord, though not to the promulgation of Christianity. Here too, it is supposed as before, of those who are thus admitted to partake in the solemnity transacted within the kingdom of heaven, that they are thereby received into the society of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of the old dispensation; and not only so, but what was not specified before, into that of the prophets likewise: that is, not merely of the founders of the Jewish community, but of all the holy and pious men, who afterwards lived among them, from the commencement of the ancient dispensation to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Nor is it less clearly implied that they who are the proper subjects of the exclusion from participating in the same solemnity, which falls to the lot of these others, are Jews; since they are persons, to whose apprehensions the very perception of the admission of the patriarchs first, and of the prophets in the next place, into that state of things from which they find themselves shut out, is supposed to form a very sensible aggravation of their own misfortune and disappointment. It is implied, therefore, in such a representation, that the admission even of those who find themselves excluded at last, was something which they expected as naturally for themselves, as for the patriarchs, and the rest of the righteous

men, under the old dispensation. The admission of these, then, must have been regarded as an earnest of their own; or for the same reasons for which it had taken place itself, must be supposed to have authorized a just expectation of their own: a supposition which, on either presumption of its real motive, would still be accounted for, by referring it to those assurances, promises, or privileges, which having been originally given to the founders of the Jewish nation, might, whether reasonably or unreasonably, be considered to have become the birthright of their posterity. The fulfilment of those assurances to the patriarchs themselves, or to any portion of their descendants, would so far be an earnest of their fulfilment to all, or an inducement to their descendants to expect their fulfilment for all; under which circumstances the parties who are supposed to be actuated by the feeling of rage or mortification, at the unexpected discovery of a contrary result at last, must be the natural seed of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the brethren of the prophets and holy men of old, according to the flesh; that is, Jews as such.

Nor is this all. The same persons, who experience this disappointment of their hopes at last, founded as they were originally, are supposed to be Jews of our Saviour's time; for none but such could be capable of saying, as these are described to do, in the anguish of their souls—in answer to the declaration that he knew not whence they were—that he had taught in their streets—that they had eaten and drunk in his presence. Whence, we may further observe, that as this second description not only implies the fact of a banquet in general, and of

every circumstance necessarily connected with such a solemnity, like the first; but what is more, recognises the personal existence of a certain οἰκοδεσπότης, or master of the house, by whom the banquet is given—and attributes to him the proper act of rising up, and shutting the door, which produces such critical consequences in determining the commencement of the feast, and in confirming or abrogating for ever, the privilege of admission to, and the right of partaking in, the celebrity, as concerned his guests; so it very clearly supposes this master himself to be none other but our Saviour Christ: for none but our Saviour could be addressed in such language, or return such an answer to that address, as is supposed in the description to pass between the master of the feast, and his excluded guests.

Again, it is implied, that they who are admitted to partake of the solemnity in this instance, are admitted not only in contradistinction to those who are excluded from it, but instead of them: and that they who are excluded from partaking in it, are not merely dispossessed themselves of a privilege which once was theirs, but see it transferred to others, who enjoyed it not before. The declaration indeed, that many should come from all quarters under heaven, and sit down in the kingdom of God with the patriarchs and prophets, would not of itself imply that the object of their sitting down there, was to supersede their natural descendants, the Jews of our Saviour's time, the heirs of the kingdom according to the flesh; or the effect of their admission was necessarily to be the exclusion of the rest; but taken in conjunction with the final assurance, "And be-"hold, there are last who shall be first, and there are

" first who shall be last," it may be made to appear that it does.

This remarkable proposition with a slight modification of the expressions, is found once in each of the three first evangelists; but in the fullest and plainest form of all, in St. Luke. There can be no doubt, that in its personal application, or its objective sense, it must be understood of the Jews on the one hand, and of the Gentiles on the other; and with regard to its material statement, or subjective truth, that it must be understood of some common circumstance or characteristic, possessed by the one and not possessed by the other, of such a kind that its presence in the one case as necessarily entitled the possessors to the rank and estimation of first, as its absence in the other, its nonpossessors to the rank and estimation of last.

It must be understood too of some common circumstance or characteristic, which besides its virtue in thus discriminating between the personal dignity, order of precedence, and mutual relation of the parties, was as much possessed by the one, as wanted by the other, at the time then present when our Lord pronounced these words; and therefore was producing its natural effects in distinguishing the parties as first and last, in comparison of the same thing, at that time also.

It was something, however, the possession and the nonpossession of which, as distinctive of such and such subjects at present, should sometime be inverted; so that they who possessed it now, should cease to have it then, and they who wanted it now, should come to have it then. This change in the characteristic circumstances of the two subjects

would entail a change in the relation before existing between them; by which they, who until then were first, should subside into last, and they, who before were last, should be advanced to be first.

Now those, of whom the present propriety in this characteristic circumstance, and the consequent title to the rank and estimation of *first*, are intended to be understood, are doubtless the Jews; and they, who by wanting that circumstance at present were opposed to them comparatively as *last*, must be the Gentiles. It is implied, then, that the Gentiles should succeed hereafter to the possession of something now exclusively confined to the Jews, and with it to the character and relation, entailed by it, now also peculiar to the Jews; which being done, the Gentile should become as truly first then, as the Jew was now, and the Jew as truly last then, as the Gentile was at present: that is, they should change places with each other; the one should properly supersede the other, in their present personal and relative character, and whatever the Jew should lose by the exchange, the Gentile should gain.

But with regard to what this individuating circumstance was—it could neither be the privilege of being the first to whom the offer of the gospel should be made; for that was a distinction, of which the Jews having once become possessed, could never afterwards be dispossessed: nor yet the privilege of being the first to accept the offer of the gospel, when made; for that was a privilege of which the Jews, as such, never became possessed at all. Besides which objections, neither of these privileges was something already possessed, but at the utmost only to be sometime hereafter possessed; whereas the

circumstance in question consisted in some characteristic distinction of which it was as true that the Jews enjoyed it now, but should cease to enjoy it hereafter, as that the Gentiles wanted it at present, but should come to acquire it, at some future period.

The precise description of this individuating circumstance, then, answers so properly to nothing as to the privilege and distinction of standing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the relation of their children, and by virtue thereof, in that of the heirs of the promises made to those patriarchs; which is in one word the privilege and distinction of being the children and heirs of the kingdom: a privilege and distinction, which being at this very time possessed by the Jew, and not possessed by the Gentile, rendered the one as truly first in the same respect, as the other was truly last; but which depending as much on the condition of a saving faith for its continuance, as for its original acquisition, was capable of being lost by those, who though the natural descendants of the patriarchs, were not the inheritors of their faith, and of being acquired by others, who though strangers to them in descent, might yet be the representatives of their faith.

Now, laying these descriptions and representations together, I think we may infer from the joint import of all; first, that the kingdom of heaven or of God, whatever it may denote elsewhere, is here to be understood as the designation not of a certain state of being, or mode of existence, but of some local habitation, within which a certain state of being or mode of existence is supposed to be passed [o].

[o] See General Introd. cap. x. vol. i. p. 121, 122.

Secondly, that the banquet supposed to be solemnized in that locality, or the privilege of partaking in that solemnity, whatever be the literal meaning of such figures, is the metaphorical expression for the state of being, therein subsisting, for the mode and kind of existence, therein transacted.

Thirdly, that so far as this state of being is something final, perpetual, and irreversible in its consequences both to those who are admitted to partake of it, and to those who are excluded from it—it is capable of answering to what must be supposed the effects of an œconomy of retribution, as consequent upon an œconomy of probation, to the different but appropriate subjects of its dispensations, whether in the way of good or in the way of evil, according to their respective deserts.

Fourthly, that as the peculiar state of being in which not only the patriarchs of the Jews, and all the good and faithful servants of God among the same community, in every age, from the beginning to the end of the Jewish œconomy—but strangers from every quarter of the world; that is, the good and faithful among Christians, of every age also, from the beginning to the end of the gospel dispensation, are supposed to partake alike, in such a manner as constitutes the individual happiness of each in particular, not less than the general one of all in common; it will answer to the idea of that state of felicity or exaltation in another life, which is proposed as the final end of the personal obedience of all who are placed in a state of discipline and probation in this life, and is the recompense which ultimately rewards it.

Now the present parable assumes for its ground-

work the same material image as these two representations; and so far as they also were circumstantial in their details, or capable of being reduced to an historical regularity, there was, in other respects, a manifest agreement between them, and it. I think, then, it may justly be concluded that the symbolical import of the common image, is the same in this third instance, as in the former two; and if it has appeared to be there either the consummation of the present state of things, or something directly consequent upon it, and forming that particular and general happiness of faithful believers and righteous persons, which may be expected at the end of the world—that it must be supposed to imply the same thing here.

One advantage of the above review, as well as in some measure a confirmation of the conclusion at which we have arrived, is that it illustrates the process of a parabolic allegory, in its several stages from a less perfect to a more perfect state; not less than the method of prophetical revelation, with respect to the gradual developement of the same future truths in general. The two passages, which we have last considered, and the parable, follow each other in the order of time, besides enlarging one upon another in the expansion of a common material representation—differing in each successive instance only in the greater variety and circumstantiality of the details. The same general idea pervades them all; the basis of each description is the same; the particular superstructure alone differs.

The first of the two figurative representations in question preceded the second by more than a year and six months; but the second preceded the para-

ble, by a few days only at the utmost. The germ of a parable, that is, of an allegorical history of the future, is perceptible in them both; but the second, it must be evident, has more of the nature of a regular composition of that kind, and admits of a closer comparison with the parable, than the first. The parable only is a perfect allegorical representation of a certain series of future facts, under a common material process; that process being, the loss of the privilege of guests at a certain banquet, by one order of persons, and its acquisition by another in their stead; with an account of the course of events by which each of these effects was brought to pass. With respect to this final effect, the persons supposed to be admitted in either of the above descriptions, and so to partake of the feast, do just as much constitute one order of guests—and those who are supposed to be excluded, and to lose the privilege of partaking, an order of guests opposed to, and discriminated from them; as the persons originally invited in the parable, and those who were next invited in their stead: and the personal consequences to each of these orders of guests respectively, are just as much discriminated in either of the above descriptions, as in the parable; viz. that one of them loses, and the other is supposed to obtain, the privilege of actually partaking in the feast.

But in order to define and limit the parabolic or allegorical import of the idea of the banquet, with still more precision, I would first of all remind the reader of what was premised in the ninth chapter of the General Introduction, concerning the relation of the visible church, at present existing, to the invisible hereafter to exist, and on the connexion between the

final end of the present constitution of the former, and the future being and constitution of the latter. In the next place, I would observe, that the most usual figure by which this invisible or true church is spoken of in scripture, to characterize its proper relation to Christ, is that of a wife; and consequently the proper relation of Christ to the church in his corresponding capacity, is that of an husband.

Thirdly, the relation of the invisible church to Christ, as it exists at present in and through the visible, is represented to be that of a wife, indeed, but of a wife not yet united, only affianced to her proper lord and husband; and consequently strictly a spouse, or future bride. The reciprocal relation of Christ to his church under the same circumstances, is that of a bridegroom. The union therefore, between Christ and his church, before it takes place, is the union of parties contracted indeed, but not yet wedded to each other; and whensoever it takes place, the consummation of such an union, in conformity to this mode of describing the reciprocal relations of the parties in it, must be strictly the consummation of a marriage contract, the union of parties espoused to each other, the solemnity of nuptials as such.

Fourthly, the consummation of this union between Christ and the true church, cannot take place during the existence of the visible church; that is, in other words, during the continuance of the present œconomy of probation, which goes along with it: the celebration then of the nuptial union between Christ and the invisible church, must be posterior to the termination of the present œconomy of proba-

tion, at least; and therefore either coincident with, or directly successive on, the future œconomy of retribution, which may be expected at the close of it.

Fifthly, as the church itself, one of the parties in this union, is personified by the image of the bride, and Christ, the other, by that of the bridegroom, and as their union itself is represented by the solemnization of espousals as such; so are the members of the church, in other words Christians, with an exact conformity to the same mode of description, represented by the name and relation of the guests, in whose company every festivity in general, and every marriage feast in particular, must be supposed to be celebrated: as members of the visible church, which consists both of good and of bad, by the name and relation of guests invited indeed to such a solemnity, and therefore virtually privileged to partake of it, but not yet admitted to it, and therefore still capable of losing their privilege; as members of the invisible, which consists of the good and the faithful only, by the name and relation of guests admitted, as well as invited, to the festivity in question, and therefore no longer capable of losing their privilege, or being deprived of their relation to the ceremony as guests.

If these various positions require any confirmation, they may receive it from the book of Revelation; whose disclosures of the future, extending to the end of all things, take in also the consummation of the union between Christ and his church. Beginning with a point of time which coincides with the period of the first resurrection, it speaks of the New Jerusalem, which is the figurative designation for this true church, as now ready to descend

from heaven, with a congregation consequently composed of the heirs of salvation—ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νυμφὴν κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς, "made ready as a "bride, adorned for her own husband"—and of that Lord or Husband, in the capacity of Bridegroom, as the apocalyptic Lamb; which is, in other words, Jesus Christ[p]. Suitably to such a mode of describing the relation of the principal parties, the members of the church are personated by the character and relation of the parties invited as guests to the marriage union of the New Jerusalem, and the Lamb; and agreeably to the known practice of antiquity on all such occasions of attendance at marriage feasts, or any other entertainment, they are represented as dressed in ready prepared garments, white and clean, the natural costume of guests at these celebrities; which in their figurative sense are explained to be the *justifications* (δικαιώματα) of the saints[q]. The consummation of this union, then, is the celebration of a wedding festivity; and its blessed effects to all who take a part in it, are conveyed to our apprehensions by the natural idea of that joy and pleasure, which characterize such solemnities, and the enjoyment of which is the exclusive privilege of the principal parties and of those, who however subordinate to them, are their personal friends.

What is more to our present purpose, also, the

[p] Rev. xxi. 2. 8. 9.

[q] See Rev. vii. 9—17. xix. 8. This is said, indeed, to be the dress of the mystical bride herself. But the mystical bride considered as the true church, is nothing distinct from the members or congregation who compose it, that is, in other words, is nothing distinct from the guests at her marriage celebrity itself.

same positions may receive both light and confirmation, from the parables of the wedding garment and of the ten virgins, respectively: into each of which the image of a nuptial solemnity enters as their material groundwork. Both these parables are later in the order of time than the present; yet carry on the same kind of œconomy, with somewhat more of circumstantiality, according to the greater exigency of the occasion, than there is in this instance. The parable of the wedding garment, recognising the design of a nuptial solemnity in general, as sometime to be celebrated, is employed, like the present, on the subject of the provision of guests, preparatory to it—including the transfer of an original invitation, and with it of the privilege of partaking in the solemnity, from an undeserving to a more meritorious order of guests; while that of the ten virgins, though proceeding on the supposition of a nuptial solemnity also, and relating to the history of the persons who are conceived to be concerned in its celebration, as the guests or subordinate parties usually present on such occasions, has nothing to do with the transfer of an invitation to attend, and of the consequent privilege of attendance, from one order of persons to another—but supposing a certain number of persons, originally invited alike, and therefore originally privileged alike, to be present at a nuptial solemnity, it is employed on the detail of the causes which produced the loss of their common privilege to part of the number, but not to the rest. The former was addressed to the unbelieving Jews; the latter to four of our Lord's apostles: and it will be found hereafter that the moral of the former concerned the Jews as

much, if not more, than Christians, but that of the latter only Christians; that is, the moral of the latter was a particular limitation to the case of Christians, of the general doctrine inculcated by the former, with respect both to them and to Jews.

We may observe further, on all these representations in common, that a supper in general and a wedding-festivity in particular, agree together in their material or common nature; every wedding celebrity, in the East at least, being also a supper, though every supper might not be a wedding-celebrity. The material image in each of these parables may consequently, very possibly be the same, and stand for the same thing, adumbrated by its genus in the first of the number, and by its species in the other two.

We may observe also, that if the image of the banquet in each of them, denotes, as we have supposed, the consummation of all things, and the state of being, immediately consequent upon it, the figure of a wedding-feast is more appropriate to express what then takes place, the indissoluble union between Christ and his true church—than simply that of a supper; though even the image of a supper, as not only the principal meal, but also the last, which the ancients celebrated in the course of the same day, would so far be a proper metaphor to represent the nature of an event, which is the last thing in the œconomy of the divine dispensations. Nor did a wedding-solemnity, among the people of the East, differ from a supper, in not being celebrated at the same time of the day; but only in being celebrated on a greater scale, and with more of preparation,

sumptuousness, and magnificence, and a greater number and variety of guests.

THE INTERPRETATION.

It is not without reason, that we have been thus particular in attempting to define the precise import of the principal or fundamental image—that of the banquet, described as a supper—which forms the groundwork of the parabolic history. By the discovery of this import, a clue is furnished to the direct understanding of the rest of its circumstances, whether personal or material. Thus, if the banquet is the ultimate state of felicity in another life, which is promised as the reward of the faith and obedience of Christians in this life, the invitation which precedes its solemnization, and conveys the privilege of being present at it, is the promulgation of the Christian scheme; and the acceptance of that invitation is the first step necessary to constitute a professing Christian, or a member of the visible church. The master of the house, the principal personage in the solemnity, who both forms the design of celebrating the banquet, and issues the invitation to such as he wishes to partake in it, may well be considered to stand for Christ himself, the Author and Finisher of the Christian scheme. The subordinate personages, in the history of the transaction, both the servants of the householder and the guests of the master of the feast, find each their counterpart; the former in the apostles of Christianity, the latter in those, to whom the offer of the gospel was successively made. The guests who decline the invitation are consequently those, by whom the offer of Christianity was rejected; and those who accede to

the invitation, are those by whom the gospel-overture was accepted.

Now the guests were distinguished into three several orders, to each of whom the same invitation was severally repeated; so that, if the invitation itself is the first offer of Christianity, the same promulgation of the Christian scheme, to correspond to the suppositions in the parable, must have been thrice repeated, and to three distinct classes of persons. Now with respect to the matter of fact, or the actual course of the event in the promulgation of the gospel, we are not left to conjecture. No part of the Christian history is better ascertained than the times and modes of the several advances, from the first beginnning to execute, down to the complete revelation of, the counsel of God, and the developement of the œconomy of providence in the dispensation of the gospel, from first to last.

Our Saviour declared to his apostles, in the course of the last conversation which he had with them before his ascension, that they should be his witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the end of the earth[r]: a declaration, which plainly described beforehand the order of succession, to be illustrated in the propagation of the gospel on a wider and wider scale; beginning with Jerusalem and Judæa, then passing into Samaria, and lastly extending over all the earth. The testimony of the Acts of the Apostles, which record the actual consummation of the Christian scheme, and the gradual enlargement of the pale of the church by one step after another, confirms the truth of this prediction, and shews that the propagation

[r] Acts i. 8. Harm. P. v. 15.

of the gospel both began and continued in the way, and after the order, thus defined; being for a time confined to the Jews of Jerusalem and of the mother country alone; next, being extended to the Samaritans, as well as to them; and lastly, but not until the last, being thrown open indiscriminately to the Gentiles.

We may conclude, then, that the guests of the first order in the parable, to whom the invitation was first given, are the Jews, and the Jews of our Saviour's time, to whom the offer of Christianity was first made: those of the second order, to whom the same invitation was next repeated, are the Samaritans, to whom the overture of the gospel was next made after the Jews: those of the third, to whom the invitation was extended after it had been offered to the second, are the Gentiles, to whom the offer of Christianity was communicated next in order to the Samaritans. These conclusions, if they are correct, will be confirmed by the coincidence which, on that supposition, cannot fail to subsist between the circumstances of the parabolic history, as we have already considered them, and their counterparts, the particulars of the real history, connected with the propagation of Christianity—its origin, its circumstances, and its final effect.

As, first, the principal personage by whom the banquet was to be celebrated, and from whom the invitation to partake in it proceeded, agrees to the character of Jesus Christ, the Author of the Christian scheme; by becoming subject to which the members of his church are placed in a state of salvation, and are rendered capable of attaining to, and sharing in, the reward, proposed to their faith and obedi-

ence, which is to be dispensed hereafter to his meritorious servants, by the ordainer of the scheme himself, their Lord and Master Christ.

Two invitations were supposed to precede the solemnity, one at the time of forming the design of it, the other at the hour fixed for its celebration: the former, in all probability conveyed by the master of the feast himself, the latter, by his servants in his stead. The personal ministry of Jesus Christ in the order of time, was prior to that of the apostles; and in the purpose to which it was directed, was subordinate to their's. The business of the former was to make known the approach of the future dispensation before it arrived, and to prepare the contemporaries of his preaching for its reception; that of the latter was to announce its arrival, and to carry it into effect. Enough was said upon this subject, in the explanation of the last parable. If, however, the personal office of our Lord, as a preacher or as an apostle himself, was to announce the fact of the Christian dispensation, and to announce it as something future; an intimation that the kingdom of heaven, that is, the Christian religion, was ready to be established—attended by a call on the Jews its hearers, to expect it, and to prepare for it, accordingly; (which might so far answer to the supposition of an invitation to the banquet, in the parable, given before the time of its celebration, and given by the master of the feast, to those whom he designed to be his guests;) did actually proceed from our Saviour himself.

The persons, whose agency was employed at the time of the solemnity, to repeat the original invitation, and to summon the guests to attend, stood to

the master of the house in the private relation of his domestics; and to his guests, in the general one of his emissaries, and of the bearers of his commands to them. Both these relations accord to the apostles of Christianity; the former, as to those who were properly the servants of Jesus Christ, the latter, as to those, whom their very name of apostles implies to have been his missionaries to the rest of mankind, through whose instrumentality the gospel-terms of salvation were conveyed to all whosoever received them. The personal relation of all these servants to their common master was one and the same; and their official relation to his guests, as his common emissaries, and as employed by him on a common errand to them, was the same also. In like manner, the apostles were all alike the servants of Jesus Christ; and the office of the apostles was every where the same, to publish his gospel, and to make converts to the Christian religion, wherever they came.

The guests of none of the three orders represented individuals, but classes of individuals; among the chief of whose personal distinctions from each other, was greater or less proximity of situation to the scene of the transaction in the parable, and greater or less closeness of personal relation to the master of the feast. Taken together, they made up the complex or aggregate of persons, who under the various circumstances of the case, were capable of partaking in the supposed entertainment, or could be represented as respectively invited to it. The Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles were integral divisions of mankind; differing from each other not only in comparative remoteness of situa-

tion, as referred to the locality of Judæa, the birthplace of Christianity, but in greater or less proximity of relation to the author of Christianity, our Lord and Saviour himself. In their collective capacity, they made up the aggregate of mankind, which admitted of no other division than into these three comprehensive members, as such. The Jews in their political and religious character, constituted one class; the Samaritans, so far as they agreed with the Jews in some things, and differed from them in others, constituted a second; and the Gentiles in general, so far as they agreed with neither but differed from both, constituted the rest.

Between the execution of the mandate to the guests of the first order, and the mission of the servants to those of the second, there was a determinate interval of time; and between the execution of the errand to the guests of the second order, and the command to bring in those of the third, there was another; but the time taken up, or likely to be taken up, in the execution of the last command, was evidently more indeterminate, and likely to be of greater extent, than that of the other two. There was an interval not less finite, between the commencement of the first publication of the gospel to the Jews, and the extension of its offer to the Samaritans; and between the extension of this offer to the Samaritans, and its communication to the Gentiles; the length of which interval may be determined from the history in the Acts, and appears to have been in either case the same[s]. But the offer of the gospel once beginning to be made to the Gen-

[s] Vide my Diss. vol. i. Diss. xiii. p. 525—577.

tiles—the business of completing that, and so bringing in the guests of the third order, in sufficient numbers, has been going on ever since, and is not yet accomplished.

No fourth overture was made to guests of any description, differing from those of the third order as these had differed from those of the second, or as both had differed from those of the first: nor when the offer of the gospel had once been transferred from the Jews to the Samaritans, and from the Samaritans had been extended to the Gentiles, that is, from a part of mankind to the whole—could it, in the nature of things, admit of any further extension. The Gentiles must comprehend all who were not either Samaritans or Jews: as the guests of the third order included all who did not belong to the second or to the first.

The two commands to the guests of the first order and of the second, respectively, were both issued and executed, within the details of the history itself; the message to those of the third was issued, but not completed, before the parable came to an end. The offer of the gospel not being to be made to the Gentiles, until it had been tendered to the Samaritans, nor to the Samaritans, until it had been proposed to the Jews; the business of evangelizing both these latter communities, must either have been fully over, or at least, sufficiently carried into effect to answer the end designed by it, before that of evangelizing the Gentiles could begin. As Judæa and Samaria, too, were not only distinct, but finite portions of the world, the process of preaching the gospel, however extensively, in those quarters, was comparatively capable of a speedy completion, and

certainly, within a determinate interval of time; but the countries of the Gentiles, which comprehended the whole world besides, could not so soon be visited in succession, and explored. Besides which, the silence of the parable respecting the fulfilment of this last order, though not about the commencement of its execution, as referred to the historical moral of the account, which was the transfer of the invitation, with the virtual privilege of partaking, as guests, in a certain solemnity, from one order of persons to another, but not the celebration of the solemnity *with* any, or the ratification of their privilege *to* any—is in strict accordance with the matter of fact, which answers to it. If the fulness of the Gentiles is not yet come in, the command which enjoined the assemblage of the third order of guests, might be described in the history as given, and as begun to be executed—consistently with the state of the case; but not as accomplished or carried into complete effect.

The guests of the first order were distinguished from those of the third, and possibly from those of the second, in being the personal friends, and fellow-citizens of the principal personage: and the Jews were discriminated both from Samaritans and Gentiles, in being the kinsmen of Christ according to the flesh, and in possessing a nearer and livelier interest in the Messiah himself, as first and principally sent to them—than any others of the nations of the world could have. The original invitation to these guests embraced all the personal friends and fellow-townsmen of the master of the feast; which was, in all probability, the whole of the inhabitants, of a certain rank and consequence, which his city could furnish: and the whole people of the Jews

were comprehended in the design and purport of the Christian scheme, as primarily and properly addressed to them. Unto them, and unto their children, according to the apostle[t], were the promises both made by the prophets originally, and confirmed by the preaching of the Messiah, and of his emissaries, at last.

The guests of the second order stood distinguished from those of the third, either in being natives of the city of their host, and consequently his fellow-townsmen; or at least as living in its streets and lanes, and therefore in being inhabitants of it, as well as he, and the guests of the first order themselves. The Samaritans, who dwelt in a part of the country which had formerly belonged to the ten tribes; and from the time of their original settlement there, contained more or less of an admixture even of the blood of the ancient Israelites[u], were in some sense kinsmen of the Jews; and on different occasions in the history of the two communities, when they found it for their temporal advantage to claim a relationship with them, they were not slow to do so[x]. From the time of John Hyrcanus, the

[t] Acts ii. 39. [u] Vide 2 Kings xvii. 6—41.

[x] Joseph. Ant. Jud. xi. viii. 6: *εἰσὶ γὰρ οἱ Σαμαρεῖς τοιοῦτοι τὴν φύσιν . . . . ἐν μὲν ταῖς συμφοραῖς ὄντας τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἀρνοῦνται συγγενεῖς ἔχειν, ὁμολογοῦντες τότε τὴν ἀλήθειαν. ὅταν δέ τι περὶ αὐτοὺς λαμπρὸν ἴδωσιν ἐκ τύχης, ἐξαίφνης ἐπιπηδῶσιν αὐτῶν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, προσήκειν αὐτοῖς λέγοντες, καὶ ἐκ τῶν Ἰωσήπου γενεαλογοῦντες αὐτοὺς ἐκγόνων Ἐφραΐμου καὶ Μανασσοῦ.*

Justin. M. Apologia i. 78. 24: *τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα πάντα γένη ἀνθρώπεια ὑπὸ τοῦ προφητικοῦ πνεύματος καλεῖται ἔθνη, τὸ δὲ Ἰουδαϊκὸν καὶ Σαμαρειτικὸν φῦλον, Ἰσραὴλ καὶ οἶκος Ἰακὼβ κέκληνται*—Dialog. 159. 7: *Ἰσραηλιτικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀληθινὸν, πνευματικὸν, καὶ Ἰούδα γένος, καὶ Ἰακὼβ, καὶ Ἰσαὰκ, καὶ Ἀβραὰμ, τοῦ ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει*

most successful and powerful of the Asmonæan or Maccabæan princes, by whom their rival temple on Gerizim was destroyed, and their nation subjected to the Jews, they might be said to have been so completely proselyted as not to differ, perhaps, from the inhabitants of Judæa Proper, in their day, more than their predecessors in the kingdom of Israel, had done in theirs. As settled, at least, in the Holy Land, and as contiguous to the Jews—whether of Galilee or of Judæa Proper—they might be said in the language of the parable, to be living in the streets and lanes of the city both of their host, and of his fellow-townsmen; which no other distinct community but theirs, could be said to do.

The guests of the first order alone were persons of wealth and substance, and in point of external rank and consequence, in some respect on a par with their host. Now the superior advantages in the external situation of this order, as contrasted with the destitution and indigence of the rest, may be understood to consist generally, in the possession of certain privileges or blessings by the one, and in the want of them by the other; which so far as the privileges and blessings themselves were intrinsically valuable and desirable, would make their possessors *rich* in a certain respect, and their non-possessors *poor* in the same. This being the case; such pri-

μαρτυρηθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ εὐλογηθέντος, καὶ πατρὸς πολλῶν ἐθνῶν κληθέντος, ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν, κ', τ. λ.—Ibid. 187. 25: τὰ δὲ ἔθνη τὰ πιστεύσαντα εἰς αὐτὸν, καὶ μετανοήσαντα ἐφ' οἷς ἥμαρτον, αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσι μετὰ τῶν πατριαρχῶν, καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, καὶ τῶν δικαίων, ὅσοι ἀπὸ Ἰακὼβ γεγέννηνται· εἰ καὶ μὴ σαββατίζουσι, μηδὲ περιτέμνονται, μηδὲ τὰς ἑορτὰς φυλάσσουσι, πάντως κληρονομήσουσι τὴν ἁγίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ κληρονομίαν.

vileges or blessings might be of a spiritual or religious, as much as of a temporal, nature; and the contrast between the external circumstances of one order of guests as rich and independent, and those of the rest, as poor and indigent, may be understood of the disproportion of their respective situations as to religious, not less than as to worldly, advantages.

Considered in reference to such advantages, and compared in that respect with the situation of the rest of the world, the condition of the Jew, before the promulgation of Christianity, was singular and preeminent. The knowledge of the one true God; the possession of a mode of worship, prescribed by himself, and therefore acceptable to him; the prospect of salvation and the promise of eternal life, in due time, through the Christ; the possession and custody of the oracles of life; the teaching of Moses and the prophets; the adoption, the covenant, and all the benefits of the elder dispensation, before it was superseded by the new, were exclusively theirs, or divided with none besides, who did not embrace the law of Moses, and become incorporated in the family of Abraham. Their religious and moral situation then, compared with that of the rest of the world, was not merely the situation of those, who were eminently rich in certain respects, as opposed to those who were just as poor in the same; but, if we consider the use and benefit which those superior advantages might be of to them, when properly applied, in enabling them both to discover and to practise their several duties, towards God, their neighbour, and themselves—and consequently in never leaving them without guidance and direction how to act—nor without a motive and encourage-

ment why to act—nor without a power and capacity rightly to act—under all possible emergencies and varieties of action; the situation of the Jew, contrasted with that of the rest of the world in general, might be said to be that of persons, who enjoyed in their utmost integrity all the organs of sense, or natural inlets to knowledge, and had the power of using in their utmost capability all the members of the body, and every natural instrument of action, as opposed to those who were without them all; as persons in short, who had hands to handle, feet to walk, ears to hear, and eyes to see, in opposition to those who were maimed, or halt, or deaf, or blind.

The guests of the third order differed from those of the first, in being strangers and aliens; not the fellow-townsmen of their host; and from those of the second, in not being inhabitants of his city at least, but being found in places comparatively more remote. As opposed to the Jews, who composed the family of God and the commonwealth of Israel, the Gentiles are commonly called in scripture strangers and aliens; and in opposition to the nearness of relation to God in which the former were placed, compared with them, they are called οἱ εἰς μακρὰν, "they that were afar off," while the Jews are described as οἱ ἐγγὺς, "they that were near." These guests were further distinguished from those of the second order, if not by greater personal impotence or bodily infirmity, yet by greater destitution of external circumstances; they whose abode is in the highways and hedges, besides being as poor and as much in want, as the most indigent who inhabit cities, being more forlorn and deserted to all ap-

pearance, even than they. And in like manner, if the Samaritans, in the circumstances of their religious or moral situation, were inferior to the Jews, the Gentiles were inferior to the Samaritans. The Samaritans, by receiving a part of the same scriptures as the Jews, and partaking in many of the privileges of the Jews, shared in the advantages of their situation, both for the improvement of their knowledge in matters of faith, and for the direction of their practice in matters of duty. But the situation of the Gentile, before the diffusion of the light of the gospel over the heathen world, was one of unqualified ignorance of religious truth, and of corresponding immorality of practice. The light of the favoured people of God might be as the noon of day; that of the next to them in proximity of relation to him, was as the clearness of morning or evening; but that of the most remote from him, scarcely even as the faint glimmering of dusk or twilight, or better than darkness itself.

The personal agency of the master of the feast, in making known the futurity of his banquet to any of his guests, was confined to the guests of the first order; and the ministry of our Lord, as such, was confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The guests of this order alone, as having received an invitation beforehand, could properly be considered οἱ κεκλημένοι, they who had been bidden—when the time of the celebrity was arrived: and none but the Jews of our Saviour's time, as previously apprised by his preaching of the approach of the Christian dispensation, could have been prepared for its reception, when it came, or ought to have been so.

The invitation given to the guests of this order,

was primarily designed for them, and personally given by the agency of the master of the feast to them alone; but whether, even if accepted and duly fulfilled by them, it might not have been extended to others besides, did not appear: and in like manner, though the acceptance of Christianity by the Jews might not have prevented its being offered, in course of time, to the Gentiles also, yet the order of the event proved, that whether accepted by the Jews or not, it could not be tendered to others, until it had first been offered to them.

Though their invitation had been received by the guests of this order, before the time, it had not been declined by them, until the day fixed for the celebration of the feast was come. Neither could Christianity as such be rejected by the Jews, until the offer of it was formally and properly made to them; that is, until the preaching of the gospel by the apostles was begun. And as the guests who had not declined the original invitation, before the time, must be supposed to have accepted it, and therefore to have been at first not unwilling to comply with it—so was it with the Jews, during the personal ministry of our Lord; while the future Christian kingdom was announced, but not yet arrived, and was expected, but not yet revealed. Until the true nature of this kingdom was ascertained by the event, they might believe it would prove to be such an one as they had always anticipated, and always desired; and in the confidence of that belief, from the moment that the kingdom of heaven began to be preached, multitudes might be impatient to see it, and anxious to throng into it[y]. And as the rejection of their invi-

[y] See my Diss. vol. ii. Diss. v. p. 160—162.

tation, at the time when it ought to have been fulfilled, on the part of the guests, implied the discovery of something either in the nature of the invitation itself, or in the circumstances of their own situation incompatible with it, which had not been apprehended before; so was it with the Jews, when the kingdom so long before announced by Christ, and so ardently expected by them, was found after all to be a *spiritual* kingdom, and totally opposed to that *temporal* one, on which their hopes and desires were previously fixed. The effect of this discovery was likely to be, that many even of those, who during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ, might have been professedly his disciples or followers, would be deterred from embracing the gospel, and becoming members of his church at last.

The causes, assigned in the parable for a change of inclination, and the breach of a promise to attend, on the part of the guests who had received and accepted the previous invitation, were ascribed to the interference of three various sorts of motives with the summons to attend, and the fulfilment of their engagement, at the proper time: the first resolvable into the superior attraction of the desire or possession of wealth; the second, into the necessity of attending to the cares of business, the concerns and employments of life; the third, into the predominance of the appetites of sense, and the love of pleasure in general. It must be in the recollection of the reader, that the parable of the sower made a similar classification of the obstructing causes to the growth of the seed, which fell among thorns; that is, in hearts of that temper, where it was not incapable of finding ad-

mission, but of thriving and flourishing to maturity; being choked in its progress to perfection by the rankness of thorns—the deceivableness of riches—the cares and anxieties of life—and the desires or pleasures which concern the rest of things. It is enough to point out this coincidence at present, the propriety of which, under the circumstances of the case, must be apparent: to expatiate upon it at any length, is rendered unnecessary by what was said on the former occasion.

The guests of the first order, whatever might be their motives individually, were unanimous in rejecting the invitation; that is, the invitation when proposed to each, is seen to have been rejected by *all* without exception. Now as the guests of each order, denote not individuals, but classes of men—the Jews, who are represented by those of the first, are represented in their national or collective capacity; and in this capacity, it is as true that the preaching of the gospel was generally rejected by the Jews, as that the invitation received by the guests to whom they answer, was by them.

The measures taken to supply the absence of the guests, at first expected, were ascribed partly to a just resentment of their conduct, partly to the necessity of the case; and when Christianity had been universally rejected by the Jews, if Christ was to possess a church on earth, or a people who should bear and profess his name; that church could not be established, except among the Gentiles, that people could not be collected, except from those who were not Jews. Nor was the rejection of the Jews, as the people of God, at last, more a necessary conse-

quence of their rejection of the Messiah, and of his religion previously, than a penal retribution upon their own blindness and infatuation.

The transfer of the invitation to partake in the solemnity, and with it that of the privilege of partaking therein, from one order of persons to another, is now seen to be the transfer of a blessing of inestimable value; the offer of the free gift of immortal life, through faith in Jesus Christ. This transfer, then, including the loss of the annexed privilege, from the Jews to any other description of persons, would in itself be no slight punishment unto them: but its transfer to the Gentiles in their stead—a description of persons, as compared with them, so much less favoured by God, and in their own opinion of them, so meanly esteemed—would be an aggravation of their punishment, because an aggravation of their disappointment and mortification. The alacrity, with which the offer of the same invitation, which had been slighted and declined as of little value, by those to whom it was first tendered, was received by the guests of the two succeeding orders, was, consequently, the more strikingly contrasted with the backwardness displayed by those of the first, and the mean opinion which they must have entertained of the honour intended them by the invitation: as in like manner, the faith and obedience of the Gentiles, when the offer of Christianity was placed at their option, were not less eminently contrasted with the infidelity and impenitence of the Jews. Yet under the circumstances of the case, it was less to be expected beforehand, that the offer of Christianity would succeed with the Gentiles, than that it would fail with the Jews; nor could the rejection of it by

the Gentiles, had such been the case, have rendered them as criminal in the sight of God, as the same offence did the Jews; just as the refusal of the invitation by the second or third order of guests would neither have been so surprising, nor have entailed on its authors the same moral guilt, as the refusal of it by the first. The transfer of the invitation, however, from one order of guests who had rendered themselves unworthy of it, to another, who, nevertheless, had no reason beforehand to expect it, though it might serve the purpose of a penal retribution towards the former, was still an act of gratuitous kindness and condescension to the latter: and the offer of gospel privileges to the Gentiles, even when taken away from the Jews, though a penal dispensation in respect of these, is every where in scripture attributed to the free grace and mercy of God towards those.

The final end of the transfer of the invitation, was not only to collect a sufficient number of guests, to allow the celebration of the feast to begin, but to occupy the room, and to preclude the admission of the guests, at first expected. When the Jews had been absolutely rejected as the people of God, the Gentiles were as absolutely received into that relation, in their stead; and this substitution of the one for the other, became afterwards the greatest and most insuperable obstacle to the readmission of the Jews, and to the recovery of their former place and favour; for they could not prevail on themselves to consort upon any terms, with that despised race; much less on the footing of brotherly equality. The event too proved, that from the time the gospel began to be preached to the Samaritans, and much more to the

world at large, the ultimate rejection of the Jews of that generation, and of their descendants after them, was already determined on, and was virtually final and irreversible; though for the sake of the elect few, who from time to time, were still to be converted, their actual punishment was somewhat longer to be delayed.

The necessity of the case being urgent, the servants of the master were dispatched on their first errand in search of guests, quickly, and without delay: and though to some it may appear a slight coincidence, I still think it worth observing, that the immediate cause which drove the evangelists of the gospel into Samaria, was an urgent one also, the persecution begun against the church in Jerusalem and Judæa. The streets and alleys of the city were commanded to be first explored, because they were the next at hand; and Samaria seems to have been the quarter, to which the persecuted Christians first retreated, because it was the nearest whither they could escape, to be safe from the violence of the Jews. The streets of the city being speedily explored—and though all which they had been able to furnish, might have been brought in, yet proving inadequate to the full supply of guests; the spirit of the first order required an extension of the same research into the parts nearest to, but beyond the city, its highways and their hedges, where travellers and strangers, if not natives of the city, might be expected to be found: and when Samaria had been evangelized, a business not long in effecting—if the capacity of the Christian church, which was competent to embrace within its pale the compass of the world, was not yet full—what was to be done, ex-

cept that the emissaries of Christianity, who had been sent in the first place to the Samaritans, should turn in the next to the Gentiles; and complete the same scheme among these, which they had begun, but not executed, among those? The countries of the Gentiles, which included every region of the earth, beyond the precincts of Judæa, whether nearer to, or more remote from, the birthplace of Christianity—might fitly be described under the general name of the highways, on every side of the city, as well as without it; and perhaps, as hitherto separated from the more favoured locality of the commonwealth of Israel, by the middle wall of partition, such highways might be specified even by the further addition of their fences or hedges; though these may also be understood of the proper boundaries or limits which discriminated the several countries of the Gentile world one from another; all alike being distinct from Judæa. And as the highways and their fences, were evidently capable of furnishing travellers and strangers of every description, all of them, however different one in comparison of another, equally distinguished from natives or inhabitants of the same city as their host; so would the countries of the Gentiles supply converts to the gospel of every name and nation, all agreeing in the same relative character of aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

It was not implied that compulsion or persuasion was necessary to the success of the invitation with the guests of the second order; but with the guests of the third order, it was: and it is evident that the Samaritans, already half Jews themselves, and in some respects possessing a simpler and purer form

of worship than their's; expecting the Messiah as well as they, and entertaining clearer and juster notions of his true character; of an humbler and more teachable disposition in general; acquainted with the fame and even with the person of Jesus Christ, who had so long preached in their neighbourhood, and repeatedly travelled through their country, and sometimes wrought miracles upon their countrymen; would be in a great degree prepared for the reception of the gospel, and predisposed for its success amongst them.

None of these reasons was applicable to the Gentiles; but on the contrary, every motive adverse to the reception of Christianity—partly from their own profound ignorance of the principles of true religion, and their corresponding corruptness of moral practice; partly from their hatred or contempt of Judaism, and of every thing which emanated from Jews; and also from their ignorance of the name and character of Christ—and many other circumstances of their situation, which might be mentioned. The task of succeeding with the Gentiles, was, consequently, *a priori*, likely to prove more difficult, than the work of converting the Samaritans. The zeal and labours of the apostles, especially of the great apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, in their behalf; the multiplied proofs and demonstrations of power, which accompanied his preaching and attested his divine commission; the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, in working on the hearts of his hearers —were so much the more necessary, and proportionably the greater; and the splendid success which attended the efforts of Christian missionaries among the Gentiles as such, so that within an incredibly

short space of time the Roman world was evangelized by them, and the political conquerors of all besides were subjugated themselves to the yoke of Christ, is a striking evidence with what force of constraint, what importunate and victorious energy of persuasion, answering to the compulsion in the parable—the gospel, wherever it was published, urged its claim on the conviction of the Gentile world, and as soon as its true nature came to be understood and felt, with what alacrity and gratitude—it made its way to their affections.

Lastly, as the servants in the parable did nothing in the course of their several errands, for bidding or collecting guests, without the directions and commands of the master himself; so, in the whole business of preaching and propagating Christianity, whether as confined to the Jews, or as thrown open to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles, the apostles of Jesus Christ did nothing without the suggestion and dictation of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

Before we conclude the consideration of the parable, there are still one or two observations, which I shall take the liberty of making upon it.

As first, the candour of the narrative, in ascribing the conduct of the guests of the first order to moral motives, as natural and specious as any that could have been imagined, has been already pointed out. It ought not to be forgotten, however, that in strictness, besides the simple offence of rejecting Christianity themselves, the Jews were guilty of the aggravated crime of opposing and thwarting its reception, every where else; and besides their own rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, they were guilty of persecuting his disciples and followers to

the death. The punishment, ultimately inflicted on them, was as much a direct retaliation for the injury done by their means to the cause of Christianity itself, and as much a penal dispensation of vengeance for the treatment which the servants of Christ suffered from them, as a national visitation for their crucifixion of Jesus Christ, their national impenitence, and their rejection of the gospel. If there is any omission, with respect to these things, in the present instance, we shall find it supplied in the later parable of the wedding garment.

Again, as the command to collect guests of the second and third orders respectively, was general and indiscriminate; it may well be presumed that persons of every description would be assembled together, all of them equally invited, indeed, but all of them perhaps, (regard being had to personal worthiness or unworthiness, independently of the mere circumstance of having received a common invitation,) not equally fit actually to partake. In what this personal worthiness or unworthiness might consist, or how it might be applied as a rule or criterion, in drawing a line of distinction between some parts of the company—alike invited and alike assembled, in order to the celebration of the feast—and others; tending ultimately to the admission of some, and to the exclusion of the remainder, of the same number; are circumstances left to conjecture only, in the present parable: and therefore we cannot determine for certain, whether they entered into its contemplation or not. But we shall find these also specified distinctly, and not left to mere implication, in the later parable above referred to.

Again, the parabolic history is now seen to be a

concealed prophetical detail of the future course and progress of events, in the several steps of the Christian dispensation. It begins to be prophetical however from the point of time where it first enters into particulars; which is the time of issuing the summons to the guests of the first order to attend; a point of time which answers to the day of Pentecost, when the apostles first began to preach Christianity. But though it began then, it is not yet complete; and its completion may reach to the end of the present state of things: for the execution of the third order, which is the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, though begun long ago, is still going on, and perhaps is not yet near to its termination.

Again, if by the image of the supper, we are to understand the common felicity of the good and faithful of every age among the Jews, before the coming of Christ, and among Gentile Christians, since—in the kingdom of heaven, at the consummation of all things—we may see the propriety of describing it by the epithet of, μέγα, or *great*. That this kingdom is the millennary one, and this felicity is the state of things to be therein transacted, I have already declared to be my opinion; and I see nothing in the above account of the moral of the parable, to induce me to retract it—but every thing to confirm me in it.

Lastly; though the message sent to the guests of the first order, is said to have been sent, τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ δείπνου, "at the hour of the supper," at the very time, when all things being ready, the celebrity itself should have begun; yet their refusal to come interposes an unforeseen delay, in consequence of

which the consummation of the solemnity requires to be deferred some time longer. It is the doctrine of scripture that the continued refusal of the Jews to come in, retards the fulfilment even of the millennary promises of God; and as the conversion of the Jews cannot take place before the fulness of the Gentiles has been brought in, so neither can the millennium before the conversion of the Jews.

As to the objection, how the time of the supper, understood in this sense, could be said to be come, even before the dispensation of Christianity itself was begun—I think I have sufficiently obviated it, in my concluding remarks upon the last parable, relating to the combination of distant contingencies in the scope of the divine prescience; and in the tenth chapter of the General Introduction, on the different senses of the phrase, kingdom of heaven; to which, accordingly, I refer the reader.

PARABLE SEVENTEENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

HARMONY, P. IV. 42. LUKE XV. 11—32.

LUKE XV. 11—32.

11 Moreover, he said, " A certain man had two sons. 12 And " the younger of them said to the father, Father, give me the " part of the substance that falleth *to me*. And he divided his " living unto them. 13 And after not many days, the younger " son, having gathered together every thing, went abroad to a " distant country; and there he dissipated his substance, living " prodigally. 14 And when he had spent every thing, there " came to pass a mighty famine in that country; and he began " himself to be in want. 15 And he went and attached himself " to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into " his fields, to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his " belly of the pods which the swine did eat: and no man did " give to him *of them*.

17 " And being come to himself, he said, How many hired " *servants* of my father's, have bread enough and to spare! but " I am perishing with hunger. 18 I will rise up and go to my " father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, " and before thee, 19 and am no longer worthy to be called a " son of thee: make me as one of thy hired *servants*. 20 And " he rose up, and went to his father.

" And while he was still a great *way* off, his father saw him, " and was touched with pity; and he ran and fell upon his " neck, and kissed him tenderly. 21 And the son said to him, " Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and " am no longer worthy to be called a son of thee. 22 But the " father said to his servants, Bring forth the first-rate dress, and " put *it* upon him; and give *me* a ring for his hand, and shoes

" for *his* feet. 23 And bring and slay the calf that is fatted; " and let us eat *it*, and make ourselves merry: 24 because this, " my son, was dead and is come to life again, and was lost and " hath been found. And they began to make themselves " merry.

25 " Now his son, his elder *son*, was in *the* field: and as he " was coming and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and " singing and dances. 26 And he called to him one of his ser- " vants, and began to inquire what these things might be. " 27 And he said to him, Thy brother is come; and thy father " hath slain the calf that was fatted, because he hath received " him back safe and sound. 28 And he was angered, and did not " choose to go in.

" His father therefore, came out and began to entreat him. " 29 And he answered and said to the father, Lo, so many years " am I serving thee, and never have transgressed a command of " thine; yet to me thou hast never given a kid, to make myself " merry together *with* my friends. 30 But when this son of " thine, who hath eaten up thy living together *with* harlots, is " come, thou hast slain for him the calf that was fatted. 31 And " he said to him, Son, thou art at all times with me, and all " things that are mine, are thine. 32 Now it was meet that " we should make ourselves merry and be glad, because this " brother of thine was dead and is come to life again, and was " lost and hath been found."

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT is no disparagement to the excellence of the rest of the parables, to say that the parable of the prodigal son, on the consideration of which we are about to enter, is the masterpiece of all: that among the many specimens of lively and picturesque narration, of genuine pathos, of unaffected simplicity, of justness of conception and felicity of expression, which the historians of our Saviour's parables have transmitted to us, there is none, more perfect in its kind, or which abounds in a greater va-

riety of beauties, than this seventeenth parable in particular.

Even the superior extent of its detail is no slight recommendation in its favour, if we consider either the pleasure derived from its perusal, or the moral uses to which the material history itself may possibly be subservient. But, independent of this, the unity of design which pervades the narrative; the skill with which its proper end and purpose are by just and regular degrees brought about; the integrity of its action, resembling the plan of a well constructed epic or dramatic poem, which possesses both a beginning, a middle, and an end; the number and variety of its circumstances; the vicissitudes and turns of fortune exhibited in the story of the same individuals; the conjunction of two histories and as it were a double plot, in the same œconomy, both beginning and proceeding together, and both conspiring to the same effect, yet each assuming in its turn the prominent part; the appositeness of the point of time when this prominent part is resigned by the one, and taken up by the other, so as to render more striking the combined effect of the whole; the abrupt termination of the second history, after serving its proper purpose, not without a critical accommodation to the matter of fact, implied by it; the admirable vein of pathos, vivacity, and animation which runs through the narrative; the suitableness of the characters to the sentiments, and of the sentiments to the occasions which produce them: these, and other circumstances of distinction, that might be mentioned, are characteristics which, if not altogether peculiar to the present parable, are more eminently true of it, than of any other; espe-

cially as taken in conjunction, and by meeting in the constitution of this one parable in particular, as so far contributing to make it a singular instance of its kind.

Nor is it a little surprising that a narrative so beautifully diversified in its superstructure, is founded after all, on an incident the most simple and familiar imaginable; the temporary separation of the younger son of a certain family, from his father's house, and his ultimate restoration to it. The probability of the circumstances which make up the particulars of this transaction, and by which both these events are brought about, is such that the whole story might justly be supposed a reality. The fact of youthful indiscretion, and its natural consequences to the virtue or happiness of the individual; the tenderness of fathers, which disposes them so readily to treat with indulgence even their offending children; the unreasonable jealousies, the resentful peevishness, or the selfishness and envy of brothers, which frequently get the better of fraternal affection, and determine the conduct of one member of the same family towards another, accordingly; are sufficiently consistent with experience, to render a narrative, founded mainly on such suppositions, very natural and probable throughout.

One effect of this peculiar simplicity, is to make the parable of the prodigal son, a parable of all ages and of all places. Though delivered so many centuries ago, it exhibits nothing of the obsoleteness of antiquity; nothing which might not be understood by modern and unlearned readers, almost without explanation: and though addressed originally to Jews, it has little of Jewish nationalness, to ren-

der it exclusively applicable to them. It is as fresh and lively, as familiar and appropriate, as if composed to-day, and as if intended for him who reads it to-day: it supposes nothing which would not every where hold good; nor be just as congruous to the state of the case, and as intelligible at one time and in one country, as in another. So deeply is it rooted in nature and truth.

The narrative opens with a short and simple statement: "A certain man had two sons:" because, as the transaction about to be related, was entirely of a domestic kind, concerning the fortunes of a private family, and its several members; nothing more was necessary to be specified preparatory to the commencement of the account, than the simple existence of such a family, and the mutual relations to each other of the members composing it, as a father and his children. Who this father himself was, and who his sons; what was the country to which they all belonged, and the place of their common abode; what was their history previously to the commencement of the parabolic transaction, or subsequently to its close; are questions upon which no information is given, and therefore, we may presume which were purposely passed over in silence. We are at liberty however to conjecture, in respect to these things, that the parties, whose history was about to be related, would be understood by our Saviour's audience to be Jews; and consequently that the account of what happens to any of them, is to be considered the account of what befalls a Jew: a conclusion, not without its use in illustrating the propriety of certain circumstances, which will hereafter appear in the narrative.

Now from the necessary distinction of personal rank and dignity, between one of the parties in the domestic relation of a father and his children, and the other, it follows that the persons concerned in the parabolic transaction, are discriminated into principal on the one hand, and inferior on the other; the former the father, as the head of the family, the latter the children, as the subordinate members of it. And though it may seem too trifling a circumstance to be gravely remarked upon, yet it will be found to have a deeper meaning than appears on the face of the account, that while the history recognises the existence of the proper principal personage, in his relation as the father, and that of the proper subordinate personages in their relation as the sons, it limits the number of the latter to two; that is, it recognises, in their proper subordinate capacity, neither more nor less than two. From the nature of the case, there could be only one principal personage, as the correlative party in the mutual relation of a father and his children; but there might have been more subordinate personages, all standing in the same relation of children to a certain father, than two. We may presume, then, that there was some special reason for restricting the number of the subordinate personages, as described by their proper relation to the principal one, to two; which reason we may also presume, was either the truth of the history contained in the parable itself, of which this circumstance was an actual part—or the correspondence of the parabolic history to the matter of fact which may turn out hereafter to be adumbrated by it, and to require the restriction in question.

Again, if the course of the narrative, beginning with this point of time, proceeds on the supposed separation of one of the members of the family from the rest, it is implied as a necessary consequence of such a supposition, that prior to this separation, they must all have been living together. And with respect to the possible length of the period during which no interruption of the natural union ordinarily subsisting between the members of the same family, had yet taken place—it could not be less than the necessary interval between the infancy of any one individual, and the time of his arriving at maturity: for the younger son, and consequently much more the elder, was grown up to man's estate, before he formed the design of leaving his home, to go abroad.

Over this period, however, whether longer or shorter in itself, during which the integrity of the same family continued unimpaired by the absence of any of its members—the father was still blessed with the enjoyment of *each* of his children, and *both* his children were still happy and contented in the society of their father, and of each other—the history draws a veil, in order to devote itself to what belongs exclusively to its proper purpose, the detail or series of events, from the point of time when the first interruption to the continuance of this unobtrusive, and probably the happiest and most satisfactory state of things in their common history, took place, by the dismemberment of one of the family from the rest.

Now this interruption originated with the younger son; who having conceived the resolution of going from home, said to his father, "Give me my portion

"of the inheritance:" or as his words are more exactly to be rendered, "Give me that part of the "substance of the house, that share of the common "property of the family—which belongs to me; "which upon a fair and equitable partition of it, "would befall to me[a]."

Now, before he could have proposed such a request, we may take it for granted that his mind was made up to go abroad; especially as we observe, that his request was no sooner obtained, than followed by his departure. We may presume then, that the object of the request was to procure the means of subsistence, before he went from home; which means he proposed to carry with him: to provide himself with whatever he considered requisite to the purpose which he had in view by going abroad, before he executed it.

It is probable, therefore, that he had already conceived in secret the design of going from home; and because it could not otherwise be carried into effect, was induced to venture on so novel a step, as to ask his father to divide his property between his children, in his own lifetime; that is, to award to himself

[a] The phrase which is used in the original to express this portion, *τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος*, is a classical one, and of very common occurrence.

Τόλμα, Κύρνε, κακοῖσιν, ἐπεὶ κἀσθλοῖσιν ἔχαιρες,
εὖτέ σε καὶ τούτων μοῖρ' ἐπέβαλλεν ἔχειν.

Poetæ Minores, Theognis. 355.

Τῆς τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων τύχης τὸ ἐπιβάλλον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς μέρος μετειληφέναι νομίζω τὴν πόλιν: Demosthenes, Pro Corona xviii. 317—*τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος ἕκαστος οἴσεται τῆς τύχης*: Dionys. Halic. Ant. Rom. iii. 29—*τὸ ἐπιβάλλον ἑκάστῳ λόχῳ ἐκέλευε παρέχειν ἕκαστον λόχον*: Ibid. iv. 19—*τὸ ἐπιβάλλον ἑκάστοις κατὰ τὰς ὁμολογίας ὑπάρχειν μέρος, κ', τ. λ.* Ibid. viii. 76.

in particular his share of the common patrimony of both, before in the course of nature it had become his due. Under ordinary circumstances, it is not usual for children to request, or for fathers voluntarily to consent to, such divisions; whence, unless upon some such supposition as the above, in assuming the truth of this fact, the narrative might be considered to have assumed an improbability.

Upon any construction of its probability, indeed, this assumption might be justified by the consideration that the fact itself is of manifest importance to the sequel of the history, which hinges altogether upon it; and if the history be allowed to be fictitious, then, for the sake of the essential subserviency of this one particular to the common moral of the whole, it was at liberty even arbitrarily to suppose its existence. It might be urged also, that the fact of parents' providing for a part of their children, out of their own substance, and giving them the means of settling elsewhere, even in their own lifetime, however rare, is still not unexampled in private life even in modern times; and anciently was much more frequently done. The Old Testament in particular supplies a variety of instances of it. It might be answered too, that unusual as the request of the young man might be, the goodnature of his father, whose affectionate disposition towards his children is so strikingly displayed in the circumstances of the narrative hereafter, might easily be prevailed upon to listen to it, and voluntarily to impoverish himself, for the sake of enriching or providing for his son.

But the true explanation of the fact seems to be, that for causes, which though not distinctly speci-

fied, are yet very plainly implied, by the history, the young man was secretly determined not merely on going abroad, and so separating himself from his father's family, but on continuing there, and so rendering his separation from home perpetual. It is no wonder, then, that whether he made known his purpose or not, before his departure, he should yet ask to receive his patrimony, preliminary to it; and thus to obtain whatever he might have reason to expect from his father ultimately, even then in his lifetime. It is evident from the sequel, that the younger son being once gone abroad, had bid adieu to his father's house, as he himself supposed, for ever. So long as he still possessed the means of support, and of indulging his pleasures in the country where he had taken up his abode, he seems never again to have thought of his native home, however much and however anxiously the inmates of that home, might have thought of him. It was necessity which first brought it to his recollection, and made him think of returning to it: it was the impossibility of finding either peace of mind, or the means of subsistence any longer elsewhere, that drove him at last to seek an asylum from want, and a safeguard from danger and temptation, where he had once before enjoyed it; viz. under the protection of his paternal roof.

We may conclude, then, that ere the young man was yet gone abroad, he meditated a long, and possibly a perpetual, absence. Nor would it follow that, if his father was privy to his intention of going from home, he was yet aware of his further resolution of never returning; or though he might be persuaded to grant him his share of the patrimony of

the family before his departure, that he approved of his design in going away, or was willing to be deprived of his society at home. His consenting to his son's request, whether he knew the motive which actuated it or not, would prove nothing but the waywardness of the young man, and the indulgence of the parent. If he was bent on the execution of his purpose, and would listen to no entreaties, and attend to no remonstrances, which might be urged against it, (a supposition, which we may well presume to have been the case,) though it would doubtless grieve the tender heart of a father to see good advice defeated, and parental affection thwarted by the folly and perverseness of youth; yet it might grieve it more to think of turning a dearly beloved son adrift on the mercy of the world, destitute of every thing necessary to his welfare, his virtue, or even his support. However reluctant to consent to his departure, yet if there was no means of preventing that, rather than send him abroad in a state of entire destitution, the natural fondness of a father might induce him, as the least of two evils, to provide him beforehand with the means of personal subsistence; and perhaps, with care and good management on his part, of acquiring even wealth and abundance.

"He divided, therefore, his living, or fortune unto "them:" and it seems to be implied, that he divided it in equal portions between his sons who received it. Such, at least, is the natural inference from the mention of dividing a certain thing, without any mention of rates or degrees, to determine the proportions of the division. It makes in favour of the same conclusion, that even if the division is sup-

posed to have been made on the usual principle, which regulated the distribution of patrimonies or inheritances among the surviving members of a Jewish family, it would still be one of equipartition, or nearly so. The right of primogeniture, by the appointment of the law, consisted in the eldest born's being entitled to a double portion of the paternal property, compared with the claims of the younger children; but not to more[b].

The division, however, in the present instance, though spoken of as the distribution of the paternal property between the two children, before the departure of one of them from home, was only so far actually carried into effect, as to assign his individual share to him who was going abroad, viz. to the younger son; the remainder of the patrimonial estate, even after the division, still continued in the father's possession, as before. But that, although actually retained by the father, it was virtually the property of the elder son, follows both from the fact that, after the separation of the younger son from home as it seemed for ever, there was no heir or representative of the father left, but the elder; and from the reason of the thing—that one of the members of the family having already received and appropriated *his* share of their common patrimony, the remainder must have become exclusively the right and property of the other. It follows, then, that whatever share of his property was reserved by the father, after portioning off his younger son, and whatever additions might be made to it in the course of time; upon the departure of his younger son, it was all, or would be, the individual patrimony of

[b] Deut. xxi. 17. Cf. Jos. Ant. iv. viii. 23.

his elder brother, who still remained at home. And this conclusion is justified by the admission of the father himself, in that part of the transaction where he is described as using this, among other arguments, to remove the dissatisfaction of his eldest son at the nature of the reception accorded to his returning brother: "Son, thou art at all times with "me, and all things that are mine, are thine."

Not many days after the division, the younger son, having first got together all that belonged to himself, (which must of course mean, having previously reduced it to money, the most convenient shape in which it could be taken with him,) went abroad; and so, we may presume, executed the purpose which he had originally conceived, and to which the precaution of securing beforehand his own share of the inheritance, was but preliminary. The secret motive to this resolution, or the nature of the end which he proposed in going abroad, though not distinctly specified by the narrative, is still plainly enough implied in the after behaviour of the young man himself: and to judge from this criterion, it could be nothing laudable, nor even venial—nothing which might be resolved into the natural ardour and thoughtlessness, the simple indiscretion or common inexperience, of youth—such as the spirit of adventure; the desire of change; the love of novelty; the pursuit of knowledge; the hope of improvement; or any similar motive, to which that season of life is more especially liable. On the contrary, it seems to have been an impatience of moral restraints—a secret longing after criminal indulgencies, which he could not hope to enjoy under the inspection and superintendence of his father—producing

the determination to become his own master, and to render himself independent of domestic control, in the first place, with a view to their gratification afterwards.

At least, it is only consistent with this supposition of his motives in going abroad, that he is seen to take his departure into a *distant* country; a country, we may presume, purposely selected in preference to one nearer home—where, if he were so inclined, he might freely give vent to the current of long cherished and long suppressed desires, without shame and restraint, because among strangers, whose presence could not deter, and whose authority could not control him. It is but consistent with it, that the first thing he does after taking up his residence in this country, is to plunge into the vortex of riot and intemperance, lavishing his substance, while it lasts, on licentious pleasures, in which he could never have been permitted to indulge before. Still less inconsistent with it is the fact, that when, on coming at length to himself, he was awakened to a lively sense of his past and his present situation, his first reflections were those of an uneasy conscience—which could not dwell on the retrospect without being disturbed, especially from the recollection of some offence which he calls a sin against heaven, as much as against his father—a breach of the eternal rules of moral virtue, of sobriety and temperance, of piety and religion, not less than of filial affection and obedience; an offence which deserved to degrade him from the rank and estimation of a son, to the name and station of a menial servant of his father's: which offence, it is clear from the circumstances of the case, was not more the original

act of imprudence and want of filial duty, of which he had been guilty in becoming a voluntary exile from home, than the subsequent career of vice and dissipation to which that separation had led, and in which the period of his absence from home had been spent.

It is some ground of presumption too, to the same effect, that from the time of his son's departure to the moment of his unlooked-for return, even the affection of his father gives him up as lost and not to be recovered; as dead and never to be seen again alive: whence it may be inferred, that in the estimation of his father neither was the duration of his absence likely to prove inconsiderable, nor the purpose on which he was bent in going away, to turn out the most innocent or virtuous. Nor, had not such been known or suspected to be the end and effect of his departure originally, could the mere fact of his returning home, have been construed so instantaneously into a symptom of change and reformation, sufficient to restore him to the affections of his father, and to make him again worthy of his confidence.

We may therefore take it for granted, without any breach of charity, that the young man's motive in going abroad, to settle in a distant country, would not bear to be too narrowly scrutinized, or too plainly divulged; and if, when removed from those safeguards which had been heretofore the restraints of his passions, and the preservatives of his innocence, he fell a prey to the dangers or temptations of a change of scene, he became an easy, and perhaps, a willing victim. The consequences to himself, then, which are described to ensue, are such

as might have been anticipated; that he should have abandoned himself to the headstrong impulses, the impetuous desires, of youth; renouncing the principles of his education; casting off the habits of his former life; wasting his fortune, ruining his health, and sacrificing his peace of mind, on the intemperate enjoyment of the pleasures of sense.

This part of his personal history, however, is dispatched in the narrative, with a becoming brevity. For what useful purpose was likely to be served by entering minutely into the details of youthful riot and extravagance; or by describing to the life the daily employments, the gross and guilty licentiousness, of the libertine and spendthrift? The proper business of moral instruction is with the final result of such a career—with the truth of that catastrophe, in the ruin of character, property, and a good conscience—to which the course of the profligate, when unchecked in its progress, sooner or later inevitably conducts. Such was the course which the career of the prodigal in the parable must be supposed to have run: and when he was now arrived at its end; when he had tasted of every enjoyment which sin has to afford, for the temporary gratification of its votaries; when he had drained the cup of pleasure to the dregs, without one blush of shame, or a single pang of remorse—without suffering as yet from the effects of his folly, or tasting in his own person of the bitter fruits of forbidden indulgencies —when, consequently, his case might appear to be most deplorable, and all chance of his ultimate recovery to virtue and innocence, most hopeless; the secret dispensations of Providence were even

then preparing for his gradual reformation and amendment, by means of his situation itself.

For after he had now spent every thing, that is, after his extravagance had reduced him totally to poverty, there arose a grievous dearth in the country where he was living; a common occurrence in ancient times, as the history of the Old Testament is sufficient to prove. The interposition of this season of scarcity critically at the moment not only when the prodigal had spent his all, but when, from the confirmed habit of indulgence, he was least able to dispense with his usual gratifications, and least prepared to encounter the discipline of privation, cannot fail to excite our admiration. It appears too, that general as this dearth might be in the country where he was sojourning, and much as he himself might suffer from it, its operation was confined to the scene of his residence; and that while famine, with all its horrors begins and continues to be felt there, plenty and abundance reign as profusely as ever, in the favoured regions of his native home. And both these are circumstances which shew the interposition of the dearth in question, to be a dispensation of correction, as much as of punishment, in the hands of Providence; graciously designed to reclaim the prodigal from his abandoned career, by awakening him to the true sense of its nature—and to prepare him for a restoration to his father's house, by making him feel the necessity of it.

It is not surprising, that deprived of the means of subsistence before the commencement of the famine, and exposed immediately after, to privations which required more than ordinary resources, to supply the wants of life, he speedily felt himself

destitute. Yet did he not, even in this extremity, adopt his only safe and prudent course, which was to have retraced his steps, and trusting to the efficacy of repentance, to have thrown himself on the indulgence of his father, in the hope of forgiveness; for the process of his recovery was not yet over—the discipline preparatory to his regeneration, was not yet complete; and to be made duly sensible of his past misconduct, and duly aware of the evil consequences to which he had deserved to be exposed by it, he had more of privation to suffer, and more of degradation to submit to, than he had hitherto been obliged to endure.

Under the pressure of urgent want, he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country; where while the act of going to attach himself, is implied to be his own—freely suggested, and freely executed—the word which expresses the union consequent upon it, denotes an union of the closest kind. He attached himself to this master, though uninvited; declaring by his voluntary act, that he was ready to submit to any conditions which he might require, and to perform any service that he might impose upon him, if he would take him into his keeping, and save him from starving to death. But the value which this self-chosen master was disposed to set on his new menial, may be judged of from the kind of employment, which he immediately assigned him. "He sent him into his "fields, to feed swine." It was not possible to describe more forcibly to what an extreme of degradation the necessity of dependence was capable of reducing any one, than by supposing it to compel a Jew to such a service; nor consequently more

clearly to give an idea of the intensity of wretchedness and distress which must have been felt by a Jew, to induce him, for the sake of subsistence, to submit to such a degradation.

Yet even at the expense of this degradation, the servant of the master in question was not exempt from want; nor possessed of food enough, whatever might be its quality, to satisfy the cravings of nature. The coarse and unpalatable fare of the swine, committed to his care, was better and more abundant than his own, and calculated to excite his envy of their good-fortune, who had enough of such food to eat, while he himself was forbidden to touch even that. "He would fain have filled his belly with "the husks or pods[c] which the swine did eat: and no "man did give to him *of them*." What must be the place and station of that servant, for whom his master could find no worthier employment than the charge of feeding swine; and what the value set upon his services, whose treatment, even in such a situation, was worse than that of the swine which he had to feed?

It is with singular propriety that the condition of

[c] The original for the word husks, is κεράτιον. Columella de Re Rustica, v. 10, has it, Siliquam Græcam, quam quidam κεράτιον vocant. The same author observes that swine are very fond of it. It is the fruit of a tree called in the Greek, κερωνία. There is some reason to suppose it constituted even the food of persons in very poor circumstances. The name of κεράτιον is said to be given to the siliqua Græca, from its resemblance to a small horn, bent nearly double. Though all kinds of *siliquæ*, however, are species of *legumina*, or fruits which grow in a pod; I should think the word κεράτιον might still be applied to fruits that grow in an husk or shell, with beards or spikes attached to it; like that, for example, which encloses the fruit of the horse chestnut.

the prodigal, up to the point of time when he was still immersed in sensuality and sin, is described as the situation of a man beside himself—of one whom insanity has deprived of the power of self-control and self-direction; and the first symptoms of a change in his feelings, preparatory to his entire reformation, as a returning to his senses—as the recovery of his reason and self-possession. Excess of pleasure, like intemperance in wine or strong drink, inebriates the soul, and steeps the faculties both of mind and body, in an unnatural lethargy, which the expressive language of scripture compares, while it lasts, to a living death. Adversity and privation, solitude and reflection, dissipate the stupor, sober the understanding, and restore the powers both of mind and of body to their former tone and vigour.

Reduced as the prodigal was to a state of destitution like this; poor and friendless in a strange country: an unwelcome pensioner on the bounty of a proud and supercilious master, who had neither desired his services, nor seemed to think them worth remunerating; degraded by the nature of his employment below the infamy of servitude and dependence itself; and all this, as the consequence of his own folly and wickedness; he had reason enough, as well as opportunity, for the exercise of a deep, sincere, and humiliating self-examination. Nor unless the sense of shame had been utterly extinguished in him; unless the moral feeling itself, by a long familiarity with vice and forbidden pleasure, had been depraved and deadened, beyond the possibility of a recovery to its natural sensibility; unless he could equally have forgotten both what he once had been,

and what he now was, and how he had become so, he could not cast a glance on the past, since he bade adieu to innocence, without compunction and remorse.

His first reflections were such, as under the circumstances of the case, were most likely to present themselves, being obtruded upon him by the nature of his situation itself; in the lively contrast between the sense of the indigence and misery from which he was suffering at this time, and the remembrance of that plenty and comfort which had always distinguished his father's house, while he was an inmate of it, and no doubt continued to distinguish it still; an abundance, diffusing itself to the humblest retainer of the family, and ministering to the wants of all, from the highest to the lowest, with never-failing profusion. "How many "hired servants of my father's, have bread enough "and to spare! but I am perishing with hunger." He was himself no hired servant, but a son; a son too, to whom, had he been contented to stay at home, in the peaceful enjoyment of domestic innocence, as next in dignity to the head of the family, and in proximity of relation, and the degree of personal endearment to his father, on a par with his brother, or second only to him—the choicest blessings which his native home might have had to bestow, must have been reserved—as no more than his due.

He could not, however, fail to remember, that by his own rash act he had voluntarily renounced his right to these blessings; and both by his original breach of filial obedience, and still more by the enormity of his conduct since, had forfeited his title to

the name and privileges of a son. Did he therefore even determine on emancipating himself, by one decisive step, from his present infamous situation; and on returning to find again, if possible, his former innocence and virtue, where alone he could hope to recover them—in the asylum of his paternal abode—still it could not be with the expectation not only of forgiveness, but also of being restored to his former place in the affections of his father—or to his former dignity of personal relation, as his son. Much as he might anticipate from the well-known tenderness of his father, the very sense of fitness, the very consciousness of his past misconduct, and the disposition to make all the amends for it in his power, by submitting to every privation and disgrace which it justly entitled him to, would not allow him to anticipate this.

But he might still hope that admission to those abodes of security, abundance, and happiness, in which he had once the undoubted right and interest of a son, would not be denied him even now that he had forfeited this right, if he sought it in a character as suitable to a penitent and suppliant, as to an offending and unworthy, son—in the character of a son, returning to claim no greater interest in those blessings than any stranger was free to claim; nor to ask any greater personal favour from being taken into their enjoyment again, than what might be conceded even to a stranger, who sought it in the same capacity of a menial or retainer of the family. Full as his father's house might be, there was doubtless room for one more; and great as were the demands upon its bounty, its supplies were more than adequate to the necessities of its inmates, all of whom

had enough and to spare. In a word, though he could no longer expect to be received at home again as a son, he might still hope to obtain admission as a servant.

This then, is the resolution to which his meditations on his present and his past situation, at length conducted him. "I will rise up and go to my fa- "ther, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned "against heaven, and before thee, and am no longer "worthy to be called a son of thee: make me as one "of thy hired servants." And if the first step necessary to reform the character, or to remedy the consequences of past imprudence, is to become conscious of its imperfections, or sensible of the error which has been committed; it is not less essential to the desired effect, that the first good motive which may be conceived under the influence of such feelings, should be promptly obeyed and executed. The commencement of such a change for the better is the work of divine grace; which having originated the tendency, requires it to be followed up and improved by ourselves; and if the first impulse is duly seconded, it will be succeeded by more; until the seeds which have thus been sown and cherished, are ripened at length to a happy maturity. Hence without any further delay—without stopping to argue with himself the possible chances of success or failure, which might attend on the execution of his design—and already the better for his resolution itself, and the more deserving of the reception which was in store for him—the humbled and penitent prodigal, has no sooner resolved than he acts; and has scarcely made up his mind to trust for every thing to his father's forgiveness, before he is seen to be on his way to

his father's house. "And he rose up, and went to "his father."

The sequel of the narrative from this point forward, is eminently beautiful and affecting. Whether it was accident or design which produced such a coincidence—yet it is implied in the account, and with the happiest effect, that before the prodigal could have reached home, before he could have made himself known again, much more have declared the purpose of his coming; his father had already discovered his approach, already anticipated his petition, and already determined to concede it.

"And while he was still a great *way* off, his fa- "ther saw him:" as if, though he might with too much reason long since have given him up for lost, yet with an affectionate pertinacity, clinging to hope when hope itself was desperate, he had still cherished in secret the expectation of seeing him again; he had been daily on the watch for the first symptoms of his return; and at the very moment of his reappearance was actually gazing in the direction in which he had seen him depart, with a presentiment that he should discover him returning by it again. When therefore the form of a traveller, journeying towards him, appeared in the distance—so sharpsighted is paternal tenderness, or such are the secret sympathies which connect us with the objects of our dearest affections—he discovered in that distant view, the accomplishment of his fondest hopes; he recognised in the form of that traveller, so indistinctly seen, his long lost and unheard-of son. Who but a father, would at the first glance have recognised a son, whose image, time and absence alone might have obliterated from his memory; or however in-

delible the impression of what he once had been; who but a father, and a father of exemplary tenderness and attachment to his children, would have perceived that the stranger coming towards him, and still a great way off, clothed in the rags and tatters of poverty, foot-sore and galled with travel, broken down by want and privations, emaciated perhaps by the consequences of former riot and intemperance, was the son of his youth, the son of his best hopes and kindliest affections in time past?

Had he cherished any angry feelings towards him heretofore; had he regarded him, since his departure from home, until now, as no longer worthy of the name of his son, or fit to be remembered in that relation; yet this sudden discovery of his person, returning as he was, after so many years of absence, during which nothing had been heard and known of him, or nothing which a father would wish to hear and know of a son; returning of his own accord, to throw himself at his father's feet; returning a wiser and better man, reformed and ameliorated by the severe but salutary discipline of adversity, and from the sad experience of the calamitous consequences which had followed the sacrifice of domestic innocence, domestic happiness, domestic peace and security, in the bosom of his native family, for ought which a deceitful, though tempting, world had to offer abroad, in their stead—disposed to regard and to appreciate his former blessings as they deserved—these, and similar reflections, which the appearance of his son spontaneously awakened in the mind of the father, suppressed the rising tendency of resentment founded on the remembrance of past misconduct, and compelled him to listen only to the

voice of nature, pleading at this moment too loudly and earnestly to be resisted.

He was touched, therefore, with pity; and yielding to the impulse of his feelings, he ran himself to meet his son, with all the impatience of a father to welcome the return of a darling child, who had never given him pain, or cause of blame, except by the length of his absence from home; and without waiting to hear any confession of his faults, or to receive any entreaty of forgiveness, he gave him the most expressive assurance of renewed cordiality and good-will towards him, by falling on his neck and kissing him tenderly [d].

The young man, however, though received with such unmerited and unexpected kindness, and no doubt proportionably encouraged by the nature of his welcome, yet did not forget, nor was it proper that he should have forgotten, the acknowledgment of his unworthiness of it, the expression of his shame and penitence, and the profession of his readiness to submit to any degradation, more becoming the character or relation of a servant than that of a son, which his father might think fit to

[d] Homer supposes Penelope to receive Telemachus, on his return to Ithaca, after a similar manner:

Κύσσε δέ μιν κεφαλήν τε καὶ ἄμφω φάεα καλά.

Mr. Harmer, ii. 53. ch. vi. obs. xxi. observes from Dr. Shaw, that persons in the East, who are intimately acquainted, and of equal age, dignity, or the like, mutually kiss the hand, the head, the shoulder.

The word which expresses the act, in the original is καταφιλεῖν; a stronger term as compounded with the preposition, than it would have been without it: denoting not simply to kiss, but to kiss *tenderly, warmly,* or the like; to overwhelm, as it were, with kisses.

impose upon him. For something was due to the circumstances under which his own reappearance took place, requiring such an avowal from him, to attest the sincerity of his repentance, and the reality of the change for the better which had been produced in him, before he could fitly be even taken in again at home; though not less might also be due to the kindness and indulgence of the father, with which the very expression of penitence on the part of his son, the simple assurance that he was truly a reformed character, the mere conviction that he sincerely desired to be forgiven, would be reasons sufficient, freely to forget the past, and to restore him at once to his former place in his favour and confidence.

He addresses him, therefore, and intercedes for his forgiveness, in the terms which he had already resolved upon: "Father, I have sinned against "heaven, and before thee, and am no longer worthy "to be called a son of thee." But if he had intended to add, as we may presume he did, "Make "me as one of thy hired servants; take me in, but "treat me henceforward as a servant;" his father, as if anticipating what he was about to say, and with a degree of condescension not to have been expected but from the utmost tenderness and delicacy, anxious to spare him the pain even of the declaration, and to convince him of his entire restitution to the place and character, the dignity and prerogatives of a son, even before he could have disclaimed them—turns to his servants, the silent spectators of this scene, and not uninterested as to the way in which it might terminate to both the parties concerned it; commanding them to bring forth

the best robe which the house could furnish, and to put it on his son, instead of the mean and beggarly attire in which he was at present clothed; to provide a ring of gold for his fingers, and shoes or sandals for his feet; distinctions of dress, and ornaments of the person anciently, in which, as it is well known to classical readers, no slave, nor any but the richest, the noblest, and the freeborn, were privileged to partake [e].

[e] Dio, xlviii. 45: Τὸ δὲ δὴ τῶν δακτυλίων τοιόνδε ἐστίν· οὐδενὶ τῶν πάλαι Ῥωμαίων, οὐχ ὅτι τῶν δουλευσάντων ποτὲ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῶν ἐν ἐλευθέρῳ γένει τραφέντων, δακτυλίοις χρυσοῖς, πλὴν τῶν τε βουλευτῶν καὶ τῶν ἱππέων χρῆσθαι, ὥσπερ εἴρηταί μοι, ἐξῆν. And hence, the concession of liberty to wear a ring of gold, to persons who were merely liberti, or libertini generis, as to Menas, in the instance alluded to by the historian, a freedman of S. Pompeius, and afterwards to Antonius Musa, a freedman of Augustus, (see Dio, liii. 30.) was a special privilege, intended to be the reward of what were supposed peculiar and very meritorious services. Cf. Plin. H. N. xxxiii. 8. The only kind of ring which a slave could wear at Rome, was one of iron. Yet Pliny observes, H. N. xxxiii. 6: Necnon et servitia jam ferrum auro cingunt; that is, they had begun to wear a ring of gold round about their proper one of iron. Juvenal thus expresses his indignation at the breach of the rule alluded to by Dio, in favour of some well-known characters of the day, originally slaves.

> Cum pars Niliacæ plebis, cum verna Canopi
> Crispinus, Tyrias humero revocante lacernas,
> Ventilet æstivum digitis sudantibus aurum,
> Nec sufferre queat majoris pondera gemmæ:
> Difficile est satyram non scribere. I. 25.

The earliest mention of the use of rings is doubtless Genesis xli. 42: "And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and "put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of "fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck." The history of the celebrated ring of Polycrates, about B. C. 530. I apprehend must be familiar to every one: see Herodotus, iii. 39—43.

Lastly, as what was only natural upon an occasion which justified the utmost degree of domestic

This ring Herodotus calls an emerald; by others it is said to have been a sardonyx stone; (Plin. H. N. xxxvii. 1: Solini Polyh. xxxiii. 18;) and we are told by Pliny it was still to be seen at Rome, in his time, in the temple of Concord, where Augustus had dedicated it in an horn of gold. Pausanias, after Herodotus, calls it an emerald, and on the same authority mentions the name of the artist who made it, as Theodorus of Samos: viii. xiv. 5. Clemens Alexandrinus says its device was a lyre.

Allusions to the ring as an ornament of the person, or as a characteristic appendage of such and such a rank in life, are very common in the Latin poets.

Sæpe, velut gemmas ejus signumve probarem,
Per causam memini me tetigisse manum.
Tibull. i. vi. 25.

Ecce, jacent collo sparsi sine lege capilli;
Nec premit articulos lucida gemma meos.
Ovid. Heroid. Epp. Sappho Phaoni, 73.

Ipsa dedit gemmas digitis, et crinibus aurum;
Et vestes humeris induit ipsa meis.
Cydippe Acontio, 89.

Cum tibi, quæ faciam, mea lux, dicamve, placebunt,
Versetur digitis anulus usque tuis. Amorum, i. iv. 25.

Anule, formosæ digitum vincture puellæ,
In quo censendum est nil nisi dantis amor;
Munus eas gratum. te læta mente receptum
Protinus articulis induat illa suis.
Tam bene convenias, quam mecum convenit illi:
Et digitum justo commodus orbe teras, etc.
Ibid. ii. xv. 1. sqq.

Nec toga decipiat filo tenuissima: nec si
Anulus in digitis alter et alter erit.
De Arte Amandi, iii. 445.

Hæc tibi dissimulas, sentis tamen, optime, dici,
In digito qui me fersque refersque tuo.
Effigiemque

festivity, and by which not merely the heads of the family, but every member of it, from the highest to the lowest, were proportionably affected, he directs his servants to bring forth the fatted calf, reserved in store for some time of more than usual rejoicing, and having slain it, to eat it and make themselves merry along with him; all commemorating as it deserved, so unexpected and yet so happy an event, as the recovery of a son or a master, who had long

> Effigiemque meam fulvo complexus in auro,
> Cara relegati, qua potes, ora vides. Tristium, i. vi. 5.

Cf. Prop. iv. iii. 51, 52: vii. 9, 10—Ovid. Amor. iii. viii. 15: Medicamina faciei, 19, 20—Hor. Serm. ii. vii. 8—Juven. v. 43: vi. 26. 155: vii. 88. 139. 143: xi. 42. 128—Persius i. 15—Statius Silv. ii. i. 134.

Charito, in his romance, p. 7. l. 19. describes the appearance of a fine gentleman as follows: *κόμην εἶχε λιπαρὰν, καὶ βοστρύχους μύρων ἀποπνέοντας, ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑπογεγραμμένους, ἱμάτιον μαλακὸν, ὑπόδημα λεπτὸν, δακτύλιοι βαθεῖς ὑπέστιλβον.* Cf. Seneca, Natur. Quæst. vii. xxxi. 5—Maximus Tyrius, Diss. xxxvi. 2. p. 423. l. 7.

For much curious information relating to the history, the antiquity, the uses, &c. of rings, signets, and the like, see Pliny, H. N. xxxiii. 4—8: xxxvii. 1—6. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, ii. 662, 663. Strom. v. 5. that Pythagoras forbade his followers the use of rings, or the sculpturing the images of the gods on them. In his Pædagogus, iii. ii; i. 288. 37. he himself would allow the use of them to *men*, but only on the tip of the little finger; and he recommends by way of signet such devices as a dove, a fish, a ship with her sails set before the wind, a lyre, (like the seal of Polycrates), an anchor; a fisherman, or the like; to remind the wearer of the apostles, *καὶ τῶν ἐξ ὕδατος ἀνασπωμένων παιδίων*—in which last words there is a plain allusion to the baptism of infants, by dipping or immersion, as a well-known custom of the time.

According to Sir John Chardin, rings, or seals inclosed in rings, are still commonly worn in the East: Harmer, ii. 395. ch. x. obs. xii.

been considered dead, but was now come to life again—and had long been given up for lost, but was now on a sudden found[f]. "And they began "to make themselves merry."

[f] Λωτὸς βοάσθω, καὶ ποδῶν ἔστω κτύπος.

Iphigenia in Aulide, 428.

Mr. Harmer tells us, (ii. 53. ch. vi. obs. xxi.) from Sir John Chardin, that no feast is celebrated in the East, without these two accompaniments of music and dancing. The word *συμφωνία*, however, in the parable, implies both vocal and instrumental music; singing, as well as playing.

Athenæus relates from Theopompus, (ix. 32.) that the Egyptians made Agesilaus, when he came into Egypt, presents, among other things, of fatted geese and fatted calves. A fatted calf is alluded to Gen. xviii. 7. 1 Sam. xxviii. 24.

With regard to the language of the parable in speaking of the former state of the prodigal; it is very common to apply to such a condition the name of a living death. Origen, i. 398 A. Contra Cels. ii .12. observes, *οἱ δὲ Πυθαγόρειοι κενοτάφια ᾠκοδόμουν τοῖς μετὰ τὸ προτραπῆναι ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν, παλινδρομήσασιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἰδιωτικὸν βίον, κ', τ. λ.* With which he contrasts the usage of the Christians, ibid. 483. D. iii. 51: *καὶ τὸ μὲν τῶν Πυθαγορείων σεμνὸν διδασκαλεῖον κενοτάφια τῶν ἀποστάντων τῆς σφῶν φιλοσοφίας κατεσκεύαξε, λογιζόμενον νεκροὺς αὐτοὺς γεγονέναι. οὗτοι δὲ* (that is, the Christians) *ὡς ἀπολωλότας καὶ τεθνηκότας τῷ Θεῷ τοὺς ὑπ' ἀσελγείας ἤ τινος ἀτόπου νενικημένους, ὡς νεκροὺς πενθοῦσι· καὶ ὡς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάντας, ἐὰν ἀξιόλογον ἐνδείξωνται μεταβολὴν, χρόνῳ πλείονι τῶν κατ' ἀρχὰς εἰσαγομένων, ὕστερόν ποτε προσίενται.* Cf. Clem. Alex. ii. 680. 13—19. Strom. v. 9.

Accordingly, in Clement of Alexandria's account of the young man, who after being converted to Christianity, but lapsing into a very abandoned and reckless course of life, was again recovered by the apostle St. John; this is part of the dialogue between the bishop, to whose care he had been previously committed, and St. John, relating to him: *ἐκεῖνος τέθνηκε. πῶς, καὶ ποῖον θάνατον; Θεῷ τέθνηκεν, εἶπεν· ἀπέβη γὰρ πονηρὸς καὶ ἐξώλης, καὶ τὸ κεφάλαιον, λῃστής, κ', τ. λ.* Operr. ii. 960. l. 3. Quis dives salvetur? 42.

It was a favourite sentiment of Heraclitus to call life death,

With this point of time, the history of the younger brother, so far as it constitutes an entire and independent transaction—beginning with his original separation from his father's family, and continued in his temporary estrangement to it, and concluded by his final restoration thither again—may be considered to be brought to a close. The history of the other member of the family, his elder brother, is no doubt as individual an history as that of the younger; which both began at the same point of time with it, and must have run parallel to it ever after. But it began, and continued until now, comparatively in silence; though not the less real on that account, nor less truly the history of what must be supposed to have befallen the other member of the same family, and to have made up the particulars of his personal history, during the time that his brother was abroad. Nor would it be difficult to shew, with respect to these particulars themselves, in what a variety of ways the personal history of the elder brother, who had remained with his father at home —from the nature of the case—stands opposed to that of the younger, during the period of his sojourn abroad; with the advantage in every thing that could characterise the personal quality of wisdom as opposed to folly, and of virtue as opposed to vice, or the accidental distinctions of good fortune as opposed to bad, and of prosperity as opposed to adversity—entirely on the side of the former. But on

and death life. Lucretius thus reproaches one of the *many*, on his reluctance to part with life.

> Tu vero dubitabis, et indignabere, obire,
> Mortua quoi vita est prope jam vivo, atque videnti?
>
> iii. 1058.

these points we shall find an opportunity of enlarging elsewhere. No sooner however is the story of the younger brother apparently at an end, than that of the elder assumes the prominent part; the circumstance which draws it into notice, and gives it the principal share of importance in the sequel of the narrative, being the last act of the preceding history itself; the return of the younger son, his reconciliation with his father, and his reception into the bosom of his native family once more.

At the time of this return, it is supposed by the narrative with a strict regard to decorum, and to the probability of its several particulars, as well as with a view prospectively to the sequel of the transaction, that the elder son was absent on his usual field-employments out of doors; employments, which constituted, from morning until night, the personal occupation of Jews; whose habits of life were principally those of a pastoral and agricultural people. It was evening then, or but little before it, when the arrival of the prodigal took place; for it must have been evening, when the elder brother would naturally be returning to the house, and as he drew near, would hear the sounds of music and singing, and dancing, proceeding from it; significant tokens that something had transpired, as yet unknown to him, in which all the members of the family took a lively interest—and clear intimations that the festivity, with the promise of which and the preparations for it, the series of particulars in the preceding narrative had been concluded, was now begun.

Surprised at this phenomenon, which there is reason to presume was an unusual occurrence in an household so strictly regulated as his father's, he

called to him one of the young men, before he himself went in, and inquired what these things could mean. There may be a meaning in the introduction of this personage, in his proper capacity of a servant of the family, as will appear hereafter; but it obviously serves an historical purpose, in communicating to the elder brother the knowledge of those facts, by which his own conduct was to be determined; and which he could evidently not have ascertained with the same propriety, in any other way. He was informed by this servant, that his brother was just come back; and that this was the mode in which his father had resolved to commemorate his return, after so long an absence, out of joy that he had received him safe and sound.

This intelligence, which had he partaken in the temper of his father towards his brother, would have induced him to greet his return with open arms, and to mingle in the common festivity with as much joy and satisfaction as any of the rest, excites his envy and rouses his indignation. His first impulse is to regard these demonstrations of paternal kindness in behalf of a son, as the effects of an undue partiality to one member of the family, and that the least deserving of all; as an injury virtually done to his own rights, by being expressly conceded to his brother. Was this then, the reward of so many years' constant residence at home, of so much pains and labour to please his father, and to serve him to the utmost of his ability, that no favour was to be shewn to himself—though always attending on his father, and never at any time transgressing his commandment—while his brother, who had long ago renounced his connexion with home,

and long since cast off his filial obedience, and all the time had been living his own master, in the uncontrolled enjoyment of his pleasures abroad, the moment he thought proper to come back, was to be received with so much ceremony, and treated with so much indulgence? Was the fatted calf to be killed, to welcome the return of the spendthrift, who had been squandering the property of the house on harlots; and must not even a kid [g] be given to himself, by whose care and management the rest of the estate had been kept together and improved—to make merry with his personal friends? Was his brother come home to spend *his* share of the patrimony, as he had wasted his own? and would he insist upon another division of his father's property, as he had done once before; including the earnings of his own industry—to go abroad again, and make away with that likewise? In this manner, may we suppose him to have reasoned within himself; and influenced by such reflections, all tending to inflame his resentment, and to keep his envy of his brother's treatment in countenance, to have refused to come in; that is, to sanction even by his presence the propriety of the common rejoicing upon such an occasion, much less to take part in it himself.

When the resolution of his elder son is reported to the father, the more unnatural it was in the former

[g] It is not to be supposed that a kid was equal in value to a fatted calf; and therefore the former was no doubt a trifling present in comparison of the latter. Still it might be a delicacy of its kind, and not usually made a repast of, except upon peculiar occasions: and Mr. Harmer in fact shews that a roasted kid is still reckoned in the East a very delicious dish: iv. 164. ch. viii. obs. cxlviii. Cf. Gen. xxvii. 9: xxviii. 16, 17: Judges xv. 1.

the more it illustrates in its consequences, the gentleness, affability, and condescension, of the latter, already so strikingly displayed in his behaviour to his younger son. In the hope of prevailing with his reluctance by his personal entreaties, or removing his complaints by his personal explanations, he came out himself, partly to reason and partly to expostulate with him; nor is the dialogue which ensues between them the least characteristic part of the narrative. The language of the son, consistently with the state of his feelings, is angry and undutiful; that of the father is mild and conciliatory, as well as full of a parental dignity. Not to repeat that part of his complaints which we have just anticipated; what can be more unbecoming and offensive in itself, yet more natural and in character with the occasion, than the terms in which he speaks of his brother? whom he will not allow himself to own as a brother, but calls in contempt, ὁ υἱὸς σὸς οὗτος—this son of thine.

In reply to so uncourteous and intemperate an address, the answer of the father is directed first, to remove his son's groundless indignation against himself, as though he were deficient in personal regard for him, or did not esteem and appreciate his uniform obedience and filial services in time past, as they deserved; telling him that he had indeed always been with him, and that he had no reason to complain of his conduct. And by telling him too, that he had always been with him, he virtually reminds him of the personal benefits and advantages which had redounded to himself from that circumstance; particularly as contrasted with those personal miseries and disadvantages which had been the lot

of his less fortunate brother, who had not always been with him. If then, he had ever been with him, and always employed in serving him, during the term of his brother's absence—much as that might appear like a system of personal dependence or drudgery, compared with the liberty and license which his brother had been enjoying for the same time—yet it was not without being amply rewarded for it, and enjoying personal blessings in consequence of that very dependence, for the want of which the liberty and license on the other side, were a poor compensation.

After this he labours to remove the jealousy which he had conceived of his brother, as if the marks of favour and good-will just shewn to him, implied any doubt of his own rights and privileges; or could be construed into an injury done to them—assuring him that all which he had, belonged to him, and would sometime be his. Lastly, he endeavours to awaken in his breast the dormant feeling of brotherly piety; reminding him that the person whom he had so contemptuously called, This son of thine, was still his brother; and that common humanity, much more paternal tenderness and brotherly attachment, required them both, and the rest of the family besides, to join in rejoicing and making merry upon so unexpected and so auspicious an event, as the recovery of one, so near to them all, not merely from the condition of an outcast and alien, to his natural place and relation as an inmate of his father's house—but from a state of intellectual and moral degradation worse than death, to the ascendancy of reason, religion, and virtue over him again, as if raised to life from the dead.

What effect this expostulation produced, and whether it succeeded in removing the elder son's reluctance to come, and to welcome his brother's return with the cordiality and good-will proper for the occasion, or whether it left him as obstinate and intractable as before—does not appear from the narrative. The father is seen to be still reasoning with his son, and still labouring to overcome his repugnance—when the history itself concludes. So far, then, it terminates abruptly; and probably not without design: as will further appear hereafter.

THE MORAL.

The first question which presents itself, on proceeding to investigate the moral import of the above narrative, is to which of the classes of parables, the allegorical or the moral, it belongs; the former supposed to consist mainly of prophecies, the latter, to contain real histories.

Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been sufficient to refer, for the decision of this question, to the several criteria which discriminate these two classes of parables asunder, as they were ascertained and laid down in the second and third chapters of the General Introduction. But there are special reasons which render it necessary that this point should be discussed as an independent, though still a preliminary, question in the present instance: first, because such is the apparent truth and probability of the narrative in all its circumstances, that it might well be supposed a real history; and such is the peculiar simplicity of its structure, and the *prima facie* tendency of its several particulars, that I should freely confess the first impression excited by its pe-

rusal would be, to pronounce it a moral or didactic history, replete with moral and practical uses: secondly, because from the almost unanimous concurrence of commentators, to view it in this light—the current of received interpretation, the weight of authority, and the force of antecedent prejudice, all stand in the way of the opposite conclusion.

The reader, therefore, will excuse me, if I enter on the consideration of this question, so far as it applies to the present parable, at greater length than usual; not from any affectation of novelty or of independence of opinion, nor from a desire to set up my own judgment against that of equally competent persons, but merely to justify myself, in venturing to dissent from the received acceptation of the parable, by stating such reasons for doing so, as whether right or wrong in themselves, may appear to have some weight, if not absolutely to require such a dissent. It is necessary also to vindicate the authority of the criteria for distinguishing the several parables of either class from each other, which I proposed at the outset of the work, and to justify the confidence which I have hitherto reposed in them—to shew, that were we to trust to them implicitly in the present instance also, they would not be found to mislead us. For they are as applicable to this parable, as to any former one; and if they are of no use, nor authority, in ascertaining the particular genus of this one, I know not what deference they can be entitled to, or what avail they can be of, in fixing the proper class of any of the rest.

With this view, I shall first state such *general* considerations, as would lead to the conclusion that the parable was allegorical, *a priori;* and in the

next place, such *special* reasons as may serve to confirm this conclusion, and to shew it to be so, *a posteriori;* by doing which, it will also be found, that we shall have ascertained and defined its proper moral, with as much precision, as may be requisite.

First, though the parable should be considered an allegorical history, the meaning of which at first sight did not appear, it is still possible to decipher the allegory, to discover a key which shall harmonize with it, and unlock or interpret it throughout, in a natural, an easy, a perspicuous and satisfactory manner. But if it be supposed to consist of a simply moral history, no explanation of its meaning can be assigned, so apposite and complete, as to account for *all* its circumstances; to apply to the history as a *whole;* to suppose nothing superfluous or unimportant; to leave nothing unexplained or unappropriated. Such explanations may go to a certain extent, but they will not hold good throughout, in the present case; they may extract a moral use from some of the particulars of the account, but they will be obliged to pass over others, equally interesting and important. They would therefore be partial and incomplete expositions of the parable, even as considered merely in the light of a moral example; because inconsistent with the just application to its proper extent, of the simple argument from analogy, or like to like, which is the foundation of the reasoning in all cases, where one representation or matter of fact, whether real or fictitious, is adduced as parallel to another, and is intended to illustrate it.

Again, the analogy of former parables, unquestionably moral, and designed for doctrinal uses and

applications, would lead us to expect that, if this also were one of the number, some clue to its scope and meaning would be found either prefixed or subjoined to this, as it is, to every other parable of the same class. Our Saviour uniformly applies his other moral parables; as was naturally to be expected in the use of histories designed to serve the purpose of examples: but he has not applied this; whence we may infer, that he did not mean it for a moral example. The absence of all explanation, whether premised or subjoined, in a particular instance, is a criterion of an allegorical parable: and the fact of such absence is as certain of this parable, as of any that has yet come under our consideration[h].

[h] It may indeed be objected to this argument, that the parable is part of a discourse delivered consecutively; beginning at the point of time which is specified Luke xv. 3: and consequently, that though no explanation is actually given of the parable itself, some clue to its meaning, or some direction to its application, may virtually be afforded by its connexion with the preceding discourse.

In answer to this objection I shall prove, I trust, hereafter, that the only justifiable use which can be made of this discourse and its subject-matter, considered as subservient to the parable, is to account for the *first idea* of it, not to illustrate its *ulterior scope* and *meaning*. The principle of association would explain the connexion between the preceding discourse and the ensuing parable—that is, would account for the transition from the one topic to the other—notwithstanding the apparent difference in the subject-matter of each, and the corresponding difference there might also be in their respective drift and purpose; that the one might be a mere argument *a pari*, or from a parallel case, the other a parable, strictly so called; the one a simple, familiar, and obvious practical illustration, the intent of which, even without explanation, any one might have perceived; the other a prophetical allegory, the true import of which, independent of its proper key, it might be impossible to divine.

It is strictly to be considered too, in the present instance, that the parable was immediately addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees, that is, to the unbelieving part of our Lord's audience in general whether on this, or any other occasion. Of such its primary intention, I think, there can be no doubt. The dis-

In fact, when we come to the consideration of this very first part of the discourse, as we shall have occasion to do by and by, it will appear that to suppose it explanatory of the parable which follows, or calculated to illustrate it, would involve the double absurdity of being repugnant to the usage of our Saviour, upon all such occasions of defending himself against the sinister imputations of his adversaries—as that was which produced the discourse—and of being irreconcilable to the structure and composition of the parable itself.

We may take it for granted, on the testimony of the evangelist who records all which passed upon this occasion, that the parable was the next thing, in the order of succession, after the conclusion of the preceding discourse: that nothing perhaps was interposed between them, which St. Luke may have passed over in silence. Yet even this would not prove that both the parable and the preceding discourse were delivered *uno ore*, without any pause or cessation of the speaker's utterance, whether for a longer or a shorter time, to mark the conclusion of one topic, before the commencement of another. The evangelist himself has implied the fact of some such cessation, with a corresponding meaning, by inserting between the parts of the discourse, immediately before the parable, the εἶπε δέ: which it would have been better if the received translation had rendered by, Moreover he said; than simply by, And he said. Some interval then there was, before the commencement of the parable: and it might be long enough to shew that, though it followed upon, and might be in some manner or other connected with it, it was still independent of it; it was not merely the resumption and prosecution of the former argument, but the introduction of a new subject, or at least of one, if not entirely distinct from the former, yet only so far resembling it, as one like case must resemble another.

course which directly preceded the parable, arose out of the fact of an offence which these men had taken at a certain part of our Lord's conduct; and it is as plainly in itself addressed to the vindication of that part of his behaviour, as it is stated by the evangelist to have been pronounced to those who had just found fault with it. It is not intimated that any change of address accompanied the change of topic, in the resumption or continuation of the discourse; or that the parable was delivered to a different description of hearers, from what the preceding observations had been. If so, the parable also was delivered to the same Scribes and Pharisees, to whom our Saviour had just addressed the preceding discourse[i].

Now there is no instance on record in the gospel history, of a purely didactic or moral parable's having been expressly directed to Scribes and Pharisees, that is, to the unbelieving and impenitent part of our

[i] The change of topic, in what our Lord proceeded to say in the following chapter (Luke xvi. 1, &c.) is not more clearly perceptible, from the subject-matter of the discourse itself, than is the change of direction, or the distinction of the parties, supposed to hear it, and for whose use and benefit it was intended, from the words premised by the evangelist: which likewise should have been rendered, "He said moreover to his own dis-"ciples also." Before then, he had not been speaking to his disciples; and therefore to the Scribes and Pharisees: now he began to address the former, and therefore ceased directly to address the latter. The Pharisees were certainly still present, and heard what was said to the disciples; as the disciples had been present, and had heard what was said to the Pharisees. But it does not follow that the disciples were directly concerned in what they merely heard said to the Pharisees before; no more than that these were so, in what they heard said to the disciples afterwards.

Saviour's hearers in general[k]. But there are several instances of allegorical parables so addressed; nay almost every allegorical parable was first and properly addressed to them. It may therefore be justly considered a presumptive argument, that a parabolic history, like that of the prodigal son, which was certainly directly addressed to an audience of this description, and for ought which appears to the contrary, expressly concerned and was intended for them, should ultimately turn out to be allegorical, rather than moral.

The nature of a parabolic gospel narrative, that is, of a prophetical allegory, is such, that while it details the facts of a real history, it represents them under a disguise, which without a special revelation of the mystery, would prevent their being seen and understood at the time. The effect produced by such representations, is also the end which they were designed to answer; that is, to blind the eyes of a certain description of persons against the perception of those very truths which they would not willingly have apprehended, if they could. To the attainment of such an end, the addition in a particular instance, of any glimpse of light however obscure, of any clue however indefinite and indistinct, which might possibly have served to the discovery of the secret, would manifestly be incongruous.

To the delivery of every parabolic allegory, we

k Perhaps the reader may consider, Matt. xxi. 28—32. (Harm. P. iv. 67.) an objection to this assertion. But my reasons for not considering that passage a parable, will be stated in the Appendix. Nor is it in fact a moral example, with a doctrinal use and purpose; but a simple illustration of one parallel case by another. See my Dissertations, Diss. III. vol. iii. p. 53.

should consequently expect *a priori* the concurrence of two requisites; first, an import and sense of the mystery itself, which if plainly revealed, would be either offensive to the hearers, or unintelligible; secondly, a defect of character, a force of prejudice, an indisposition and reluctance, or at least, an incapacity, on the part of the hearers, rendering them either unworthy to be informed of the truths in question, considered as a privilege—or unwilling to receive them, and unable to comprehend them, considered as necessary to be made known. When these conditions meet together in a particular instance, they are good criterions that the history delivered under such circumstances, is an allegory, purposely intended for concealment; and therefore a prophecy —for the sake of which only such disguise and concealment at the time, could be necessary. The moral disqualification of the hearers in the present instance, (if those were the Scribes and Pharisees,) for deserving, receiving, or apprehending such and such disclosures of the future, as the allegorical parables are instrumental in making—had they been plainly stated—we may very reasonably assume; and it will appear hereafter, that if the parable itself was not simply doctrinal or moral, its latent import must have been such, as it would have been impossible to communicate to an audience like this, without reserve or disguise[1].

[1] It is no objection to the above assumptions, that allegorical parables were sometimes addressed to our Lord's disciples, yet without explanation; as much as when addressed to a very different kind of audience. Not to urge, that even in such cases, explanations of such discourses, might have been afterwards vouchsafed for their benefit, though not usually conceded to others; it

So far, then, as we have proceeded, there would seem to be ground sufficient, in general considerations of antecedent probability, to conclude that the parable of the prodigal son was an allegorical, not a moral history; a prophecy, not an example; a representation of certain future or historical facts, not a case in point on a certain practical question. Let us come now to the special reasons, which will be found to support this conclusion, and at the same time enable us to determine and state the proper moral of the history itself.

With this view, I shall premise that upon every conceivable construction of the drift or import of the facts of the narrative in general, there can yet be only one principal personage, as such, viz. the father; and only two subordinate personages, his elder and his younger son. Upon every conceivable construction of the rest of the history too, the history of this principal personage must remain the same, and neither the personage himself, nor the part assigned to him, be capable of more than one interpretation. The character of the father can answer to no counterpart but that of the Deity; the

may be replied with much more probability, that many things there were, especially in relation to the future gospel dispensation, which it would not have been more proper openly to reveal to our Lord's disciples, during his personal presence with them, than to the rest of the people; and which even they, for that period, would have been as reluctant to admit, or as incompetent to apprehend, as the rest of their contemporaries. Concealment, with reference to such things, might be as prudential for their sake, as judicial with respect to others; and as much out of condescension to their infirmity, or of consideration for their prejudices, as in other instances from resentment of the blindness and infatuation of the nation at large.

part sustained by him in the transaction of the parable, can correspond to nothing but the fact of that conduct, which the Deity, in his relation of the common Father of his rational creation, must be supposed, under circumstances analogous to those in the parable, to observe towards them.

But the case is different with the subordinate personages, the elder and the younger brother. Their part in the common transaction, their personal and relative character do not remain the same, on every possible construction of the moral import of the parable; but it depends entirely on the kind of construction of it we adopt, whether the personal relation of either is to become identified with that of the other, the part and agency of either are to be as significant as those of the other, or one of them void and nugatory, or not. Such a moral might perhaps be found for the history in general, as would suit to the case of one of these parties, with something like exactness and precision; but would withal fail *in toto*, when applied to that of the other: and such another might be discovered, as in a loose, a vague, and indefinite manner, would correspond perhaps to that of both. But the integrity and unity of one and the same regular and well-connected history, would reject the former; and the want of correspondency between the history to be applied or explained, and the application or explanation proposed for it, would compel us to repudiate the other.

I might confidently appeal to the candid opinion of any unprejudiced reader, whether two histories, of two different individuals, and of two different processes or courses of things, are not combined and

blended by the parable in its one account; whether, such being the case, either can be set aside or neglected, as independent of the other; either can be superseded or postponed, as of inferior importance to the other. In particular, I would put it to his judgment, whether the part assigned to the elder brother, is not as essential to the progress of the story, and to the developement of the ultimate result, yet as individual and as distinct, as that sustained by the younger.

These parts begin together, and they end together. Virtually too they proceed together. The history of the elder brother, from the time of the separation of the younger, became distinct from his, yet must have run parallel with his, until the period of his restoration; and as we before observed, it was not the less real, because it was not the more prominent of the two: and after the return of the younger son, the history of the elder actually takes precedence of his.

The truth is, did we attend simply to the kind and distinction of particulars, actual or implied, as they are disclosed in the narrative, as well as to their relative order and importance; the juster conclusion would be, that the history of the elder brother, instead of being subordinate to that of the younger, whether actually brought forward or not in comparison of it, is in reality paramount to it. The narrative begins with the history of both; and though it soon confines itself apparently to that of one, yet it may be considered to dwell more minutely on the deportment and fortunes of the younger brother, that it may arrive so much the more justly and gradually, at the point of time when the history

of the younger must merge into, and be superseded by, that of the elder.

The narrative ends with the history of this brother; and without supposing greater laxity of purpose in the original conception of the parable, and greater incoherency in its structure, than the execution of so perfect a composition of its kind will warrant, it cannot be without design that it has summed up and made an end of all which preceded, in this one catastrophe and conclusion—the behaviour of the elder brother, from the moment of the younger son's return, and reception again into his native home, and its consequences to all the rest of the family. And this behaviour such as it is, arises too naturally and spontaneously out of what precedes, not to be supposed indissolubly connected with it: besides, that the reception of so important a part of a certain family, as a son though a younger son, after a separation and an absence, like those in the parable, into his former relation and privileges as a son—was in all reason, too important an event to the integrity of the family itself, and too nearly concerning to the interests and relations of any other member of it, like the elder brother, not to require some further account of him in particular, even when the account, in reference to his brother, was closed; that it might be seen what effect the change in the fortunes or relations of the one, thus brought about, produced, or was likely to produce, on those of the other.

As the two histories began together, and as they must have continued to go on, even when separated, through an equal period of time in conjunction; so will it appear, on consideration, that for that length

of time, the advantage in every respect, was on the side of the elder brother. The younger son, by his own imprudent choice, became a voluntary outcast from his father's house, to tempt a perilous change of fortune abroad; but the elder one, with more wisdom, and still more happiness to himself, remained at home. After the division of his father's property, the former ceased to retain any right or interest in the paternal inheritance; of the latter, we are told by the father himself, that all which he had was his. The younger son was daily wasting his share of the patrimony, by riot and dissipation, until at last it was reduced to nothing: the elder, in the steady pursuit of the same agricultural employments at home, was daily adding to his, and becoming richer by the fruits of his industry. The younger son had justly become obnoxious to his father's displeasure; and having first renounced his obedience, and afterwards his virtue, could neither be remembered, nor owned, as a son: the elder was daily becoming dearer to him, devoting his personal labours to his service, and never, at any time, transgressing his commandments. The younger son, having once renounced his native home and the friends and connexions of his youth, was thenceforward given up for lost; having immersed himself in the sink of sensual excess, was considered morally dead: the elder was consequently to be cherished as an *only* son, and therefore a *beloved* son; the sole hope of his father's name and family; the sole stay and support of his old age; the sole heir of his property, and what is more, the only filial exemplar of his father's goodness, the only representative of his father's virtues. The younger son, by the conse-

quences of his criminal indulgences, was not only reduced to the extreme of indigence and destitution, worse than the condition of the poorest of menials; but to a state of moral degradation below the dependence and infamy of slavery itself: the elder continued in the enjoyment of the same proper and dignified character and relation at home; the next in rank and authority to his father himself, and the dispenser of abundance, along with him, from his father's table, to every menial and retainer of the family.

The scene begins to change on the unexpected restoration of the younger son; and the fortunes of the two brothers are thenceforward perceptibly different. The reconciliation of the father and the younger son was followed by a breach or misunderstanding between the father and the elder, which threatened to be of serious consequences to the interests of the latter, and which did not appear to be made up. The fact of it is recorded, and the anxiety of the father, to remove the discontent of his son, is recorded; but the success of his endeavours, or the fact of the removal, is not recorded. We may justly presume that such an omission, under the circumstances of the case, must be significant; and must authorize the inference, however melancholy, that the efforts of the father were not successful—the jealousy and dissatisfaction of the son were not removed.

For, was the discontent of the elder brother so important, while it lasted, as to damp the common joy which had welcomed the return of the younger; was his refusal to be present, or to take a part in the festivity, a sufficient reason for arresting its further progress; was nothing less than the authority,

expostulations, entreaties, of his father himself thought necessary to shake his resolution, and to overcome his obstinacy; and must all this be expressly recorded, and especially the fact of the earnest and affectionate intercessions of the father; yet, if his remonstrances proved effectual, and the son was actually persuaded to adopt the brotherly part; must the narrative pass it over in silence, and instead of winding up the account in the way which was most to be expected, and would have been most agreeable to every one's feelings, terminate prematurely and abruptly, and open to a very melancholy imputation? There may be, indeed, a reason for this abrupt conclusion, which will appear hereafter, and have the effect of shewing that what at first sight might be pronounced a defect, is in reality a striking beauty. But it is a reason which proceeds on the very reverse of the supposition of success.

We are not concerned with the further question, whether the conduct of the elder brother was reasonable and proper, or not: and we may observe that his jealousy and ill-nature themselves, however unreasonable or unnatural, have still the effect of rendering the previous reception and treatment of the younger son, by the father, in his proper character of a penitent and reformed prodigal, so much the more striking and affectionate. The kindness of the father appears to greater advantage when contrasted with the unnatural feelings of the brother: nor would the cordiality of *his* welcome have been so impressively and amiably exhibited, but for the coldness, the repulsiveness, the envy, the jealousy, which are displayed in another quarter, where, next

to himself, they ought least to have been seen. Even in this respect, then, the history of the elder brother, from the point where it becomes the principal subject of the narrative, has still a close connexion with that of the younger; and contributes its subserviency to the common end proposed by both. On these accounts, and on every other, we may justly contend, that this history is as important as the other; nor can any construction of the moral of the parable be true, which does not account for each—and apply in common to each.

Now there are three different constructions which may be put upon this moral, but not more; any two of which being proved to be inadmissible under the circumstances of the case, it will follow that the third must be the truth, or that the parable can have no moral at all. The first of these constructions is, that the parable describes the nature of God's dealings with penitent sinners in general; the second, that it illustrates the nature of his dealings with one part of the community of the Jews, the publicans and sinners, and the offence which was taken at it by another, the Scribes and Pharisees; the third that it describes beforehand the œconomy of the divine dispensations, in the gracious extension of gospel privileges to the Gentiles, on the one hand, and the offence which should be taken at that dispensation in their favour, by the Jews on the other.

To the first of these constructions it might be objected, first, that if it were a correct representation of the design of the parable, it would reduce it from an allegorical, to a simply moral history; and consequently would be at variance with all those pre-

sumptions, founded upon reasons of antecedent probability, which would lead us to conclude that it was an allegory. Secondly, that such a construction would paralyse one member of the history, that of the elder brother; which nevertheless has been shewn to be not merely an integral and independent, but even a principal part of the whole. We may assert with confidence, that on such a supposition of the ultimate scope and tendency of the parable, as would make it simply a case in point, however apposite and striking, to the nature of the divine dealings with penitent sinners in general, the part assigned to the elder brother, and the consequent necessity for such a character and agency as his, become utterly inexplicable and unaccountable. No laxity of application, however indefinite, no subtlety of construction, however ingenious, would be able to extract a tolerable, much less a just and consistent meaning, from this part of the narrative, if the purport of the whole were merely to illustrate the gracious reception which their heavenly Father is at all times ready to extend to any of his children, who truly turn to him from the error of their way, and trust to the efficacy of a sincere repentance, for procuring them pardon and peace. Had the parable contained no history but that of the prodigal, and had it confined itself to the relation of this history, as it is given in the original, without any mention of the elder brother, it might have borne such a construction, and very possibly it might have admitted of no other. It would not have been so easy, at least, to have refuted the truth of this, and to have established the superior probability of another. But doubly constituted as it is, and twofold in its ten-

dency both overt and concealed, as it is, it rejects the effort which would dismember its integrity, and reduce it to a single history, directed to a single end and purpose, as an unnatural violence, and nothing but the overstraining of an hypothesis [m].

[m] Upon the question considered above, it is necessary to remind the reader, that it is the primary intention, not the secondary or subsequent accommodations, of this, or of any other gospel parable, with which we are properly concerned. No parable, whether allegorical or moral, can have more than one primary intention, and consequently than one proper moral, the natural and direct result of all its circumstances. But even an allegorical parable may be capable of various practical applications, in the way of general edification, improvement, or instruction; as many as the reason of the thing, or the merits of the case, can fairly be shewn to justify. To the liberty of such accommodations even of the prophetical parables to doctrinal purposes, I would not be understood to wish to set bounds, so long as they are confined within their proper limits of just argument and analogy; and are proposed as accommodations, not obtruded as explanations.

The history of the prodigal son has always been considered pregnant with religious uses, and full of comfort to serious and penitent minds. The case of the prodigal from first to last, is in too many respects, an exact picture of the case of every moral agent: and each of us stands only in too much need of all the instruction, all the consolation, all the encouragement, which the analogy of his history, whether real or fictitious, to our own actual situation, can supply. The disposition of the father in the parable may be truly regarded as a counterpart of that of God himself: the tender reception, the gracious and affectionate treatment, which this disposition inclined him to grant to an offending, and before his repentance, an unworthy son, may justly authorize the presumption of what may be expected by any of his children, from the benevolence of their heavenly Father—who though they have forfeited his favour by their sins, yet throw themselves entirely on his forgiveness, and by sincere repentance for the past, endeavour to render themselves worthy of being restored to his affections for the future. The analogy

To the second construction of the parable, it might be objected, in like manner, that if the history is not allegorical, that is, if the persons of the elder and the younger sons respectively, do not specially denote the one the Scribes and Pharisees, and the other the publicans and sinners; then the narrative is reduced from allegorical to moral as before, and its application even to the divine dealings with these two portions of the community of the Jews respectively, becomes in fact only a particular instance of that general reference to the nature of the same dealings with penitent sinners universally, which was implied in the former construction.

But if they do—and the structure of the parable is allegorical—the allegory bears a special reference to the charge against our Saviour's conduct, which had been recently made, for allowing the publicans and sinners an unrestricted freedom of approach to his person; and it is a prosecution of the defence which he had before returned to that charge, in vindication of his conduct. In this case, it might be urged, that allegory, with such a reference, would be preposterous, and repugnant to the analogy of the parabolic allegory in general; for it would relate to the facts of a *past*, and not of a *future*, history; an history too, of recent occurrence; which must have been still present to the minds of the hearers;

which justifies this presumption, is founded on the unchangeableness of the divine nature, which renders God always placable and ready to pardon, where pardon can fitly be due; and on the authority of his own appointments, which have made repentance not more indispensable as a preliminary, than sure and certain as a means of reconciling his kindness towards the sinner.

and consequently, if again represented to them under a form purposely assumed to disguise and conceal its meaning, would defeat the end of the allegory, by rendering concealment impossible, and mystery superfluous.

It may be further contended, that in this case, the persons of the two brothers, taken in conjunction, must be considered to stand for the complex of the Jewish community; and taken individually, must represent its component parts. But the Scribes and Pharisees, and the publicans and sinners, though they might answer to the character of the elder and the younger brother, respectively, would not make up the complex of the Jewish nation, nor consequently separately taken, be a complete division of it, into its integral or component parts.

Nor is it probable, that so invidious a distinction of the members of this community in general, as that of an elder and a younger brother of the same family, would be made or recognised by our Lord himself: for the Jews were all alike the children of Abraham by nature, and the children of God by adoption. Much less probable is it, that the parabolic character and relation of the elder brother, would be purposely affixed on the Scribes and Pharisees, and those of the younger restricted to the publicans and sinners; the former, even though considered as members of the same family, yet the least meritorious part of it, as being in an especial manner the unbelieving and impenitent portion of the Jewish community; the latter, that part of the nation in particular, among whom, if any where, the unprejudiced hearers of our Lord, the converts to his preaching, the humble and penitent receivers of

gospel truths, were to be found. The name and relation of the elder brother described no accidental or precarious distinction in their possessor; but up to a certain point of time at least, a superiority of dignity, of rank, of desert and favour, as well as of age—in comparison with the younger; distinctions, which no part of the same community of the Jews, as one great family of God—all equally related, and all by virtue of their equal relation, alike dear to him—can be supposed to have possessed, to the prejudice of another; much less that part which, in point of moral and personal fitness, was the least worthy to be the possessor of them, of all.

In a word, though this reference of the parable to the matter of fact which had so recently transpired, or to any similar instance of the same kind, which might have occurred before, might appear to suit the history in some things, it would fail entirely in others. It might be possible by the aid of such an explanation, to elicit a general and indefinite coincidence between the allegory and its assumed key; but the moment we descended to particulars, the analogy would cease, and all coincidence would be void and absurd.

The only plausible argument, in fact, supplied by the history itself in favour of this construction of its moral, is this; that as a direct offence was supposed in the parable to be taken by the elder brother, at his father's treatment of the younger; so had an offence been taken by the Pharisees and Scribes at the conduct of our Saviour just before, towards the publicans and those who are spoken of along with them as sinners. This correspondency at first sight may seem perfect and complete. But

a little consideration will shew that the analogy between the two things fails in a very essential point. The offence of the elder brother, according to the parable, was grounded upon *personal* reasons. He resented the indulgence extended to his brother, as an act of injustice to himself. The offence of the Scribes and Pharisees was grounded on no such motives: they did not resent the nature of our Saviour's behaviour to the publicans or sinners, as an injury done to themselves, but as a disparagement to his own character; or rather, strictly speaking, they did not resent it, on either account, at all; but merely laid hold of the fact of such conduct as a specious handle for insinuating reflections, injurious to his character and reputation, among the people. Instead of regretting or being angry with him on account of the fact, no doubt they were well pleased to have such a pretext for censuring or calumniating him [n].

[n] It may be imagined, perhaps, that those expressions, which occur in the course, and at the close of the parabolic narrative, "Let us make ourselves merry—it was meet that we should re-"joice and make ourselves merry—for this son of mine, or this "brother of thine, was dead and is come to life again, and was "lost and hath been found again," contain an allusion to the concluding terms of the preceding illustration, "I tell you "there is joy before the angels of God, over one sinner that re-"penteth;" or to the general doctrine to which all that illustration is directed, of the pleasure and satisfaction which naturally accompany the unexpected recovery of a thing, that has been given up for lost.

No doubt both the general drift, and the particular expressions, of what our Saviour had so lately said, must still have been present to his recollection, and to that of his hearers also, when he proceeded to subjoin the parable. But it proves no-

With regard, indeed, to the general probability whether the subject-matter of the ensuing parable could have any specific reference to the late topic of dispute between our Lord and his accusers; the consideration of his previous discourse would shew that his answer to the charge brought against him, of conversing too familiarly with a description of persons, which his maligners, on the present and on similar occasions, judged or professed to judge, unworthy of such intimacy; was already so clear, explicit, and sufficient for the purpose, that he could not, consistently with his usual method of replying to such attacks, have resumed the defence of his conduct against the same imputation, as though not completely vindicated; much less have resumed that defence under the form and disguise of an allegory, which he had already proposed, on its proper grounds of argument, in reference both to himself as the party attacked, and to the Scribes and Pharisees as the authors of the complaint, and to the publicans and sinners on whose account it was made, without any reserve or mystery, but in the plainest and simplest manner imaginable. This examination would occupy too much room to be here in-

thing of the proper end and design of the latter, that some of its expressions, or even its circumstances, might appear to be borrowed from the late discourse, or be calculated to illustrate its suppositions. Both the language of the narrative in this instance, and the matter of fact implied in it, are so appropriate to the circumstances of the time and place, that they must be considered natural to the occasion—the spontaneous suggestion of the narrative—and no more than necessary to the observance of decorum, and to fidelity of representation both as to things and persons, both as to facts and sentiments.

serted: but the reader will find it, if he wishes to see it, below [o].

[o] The gospel history supplies no instance of our Lord's defending himself, except against a previous attack of some kind or other; nor of his protracting his defence beyond what the necessity of the occasion, and the attainment of the proposed end, required. Nor is there any instance of his defending himself under such circumstances, except plainly and to the purpose: much less of his defending himself directly at first, and indirectly afterwards. This consequence, however, though repugnant to the uniformity of his practice on such occasions, would follow in the present instance, if the sequel, that is, the parabolic part, of the discourse now delivered, was but a continuation of the same general argument, begun and enforced in the former.

The cause which gave occasion to this whole transaction, is premised at the outset of Luke xv. Our Saviour must have been beginning to teach, and the publicans and sinners all have been pressing or resorting to hear him. It is implied that he invited their approach, and gave them, according to his custom, a gracious, encouraging reception; for it is mentioned immediately, that the Pharisees and the Scribes, who were witnesses of the behaviour of both parties, began to murmur about it, or to make reflections on what was passing. It is implied too, from the language of their observations, by the way, that the occasion of this teaching of Jesus, and of the resort of such an audience to his teaching, was sometime when he was sitting at meat: "This man is receiving sinners, and eating in company with "them."

Now, it is no more necessary to inquire, who or what those persons were, that are called publicans, and more especially those who are styled sinners, along with, yet distinct from them; than who or what the Pharisees and the Scribes also were, and in what respects these last were opposed to both the former. It is sufficient to know, that both the publicans and the sinners as such, were but a small, though an individual part, of the whole Jewish community, and also the Pharisees and the Scribes; that both stood equally opposed in this respect to the multitude at large, and that, for reasons which might easily be assigned, the one were just as much in disrepute and dis-

On the mere principle, then, of the disjunctive syllogism, it would follow that if, out of the only

like, as the other in repute and estimation, with the multitude at large.

It is plain that an offence was taken by one of these bodies of men, at the nature of our Lord's behaviour to the other: it is also clear that the ostensible reason of this offence was its supposed inconsistency with such a character as his, whether really or not, professed to be, to evince the least condescension to that description of persons; to deal with them on any thing like a footing of familiarity. It is also plain, that the real motive to it, on the part of those who conceived it, was no zeal for the honour of Jesus, no jealousy lest his reputation should in the least degree be impaired by his demeaning or degrading himself below his proper rank and dignity, but a secret expectation that by drawing attention to this part of his conduct, and appealing to certain popular prejudices against it, they should lower his credit with the people. We may infer this *a priori*, from the well-known temper and disposition of the parties who made the observation—our Lord's personal and inveterate enemies; and *a posteriori*, from the tenor of his answer to their remarks, which exhibits as much of rebuke as of explanation; and therefore condemns by implication the *motives* of the speakers: for though always condescending to mere error, or to venial prejudice, he never spares malice or duplicity.

That freedom of conversation with such persons as the publicans and sinners, was considered by the Pharisees or Scribes incompatible with the character and pretensions of a prophet, or teacher professing to come from God, under *any* circumstances, is more perhaps than we can undertake to prove. It could hardly be so, unless they had gone so far as virtually to excommunicate such persons, and to pronounce them unworthy of intercourse with the rest of their Jewish brethren, even in the common transactions of life. For there can be no doubt, that both the above classes of men, whether more or less numerous in themselves, and whatever might be the reasons of the prejudice under which they laboured in the public estimation, were still Jews. Matthew was a publican, and so was Zaccheus; yet the former was an apostle, and the latter is called by our

three conceivable explanations of the moral of the parable, two are false—the third must be true. That

Lord himself, a son of Abraham as much as the proudest of his brethren: Luke xix. 9. We do not know that this familiarity of intercourse with a despised and slighted, or an odious and detested, class of men, was objected to John the Baptist; though *all* the people held *him* to be a prophet, and though it might with equal truth have been objected to *him*, if *per se* supposed to be inconsistent with the reality of such a character. See Luke iii. 12, 13: vii. 29: Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

But John the Baptist, though a prophet, was still not the Messiah; and though he assumed as his due, the title and authority of a divinely commissioned teacher, he disclaimed of his own accord, the name and estimation of the national Deliverer, as soon as the opinions of his contemporaries would have fixed them upon him. See Luke iii. 15—17. Cf. Matt. iii. 11, 12. Mark i. 7, 8. Acts xiii. 25. Now, when we consider that the persons, called publicans, as their name both in Greek and Latin, implies, were farmers or collectors of taxes, dues, customs, or imposts; and therefore, we may justly presume, *under* and *for* the Roman government; and that those who are called sinners, whether including the publicans also or not, were probably persons, whose lives and professions, whose principles and practice, might be just as incompatible with the *ceremonial*, as with the *moral*, righteousness which was to be expected of a Jew, disposed to pay an equal deference to both parts of his proper law—in particular, that they might be persons, who from the freedom of their conversation with the rest of the world, were but little removed from the Gentiles; and by the license which they allowed themselves from all those restrictions, which were peculiarly characteristic of a Jew, were more opposed to the Pharisees as such, and more offensive to them in particular, than to any other division of their countrymen—it will appear only just and natural, that to have to do with such persons as these, above all others; to converse with them on a footing of familiarity; to shew them any regard; to give them any countenance, or mark of approbation; should be pronounced inconsistent with the character and pretensions of such a prophet, as professed to be the Messiah; the Messiah at

we may not, however, appear to trust exclusively to the force of this argument, I shall proceed to men-

least, of the national wish and national expectation; the deliverer of the nation from the disgraceful yoke of foreign bondage, and not only the asserter of its personal liberty and independence, but the triumphant conqueror under whose banners the lion of Judah should surmount the victorious eagles of Cæsar, and Jerusalem, now the humble slave and abject vassal of Rome, change places with her mistress in the empire of the world. Such a Messiah, if he ever appeared, must have been the first to sanction the national antipathy towards this class of men, as above all others unworthy of his favour, and unfit for his service; as traitors beforehand to the cause which he came to assert, and by profession opposed to its ascendency, because the creatures and retainers of Rome.

The demeanour of our Lord towards them, therefore, on a variety of occasions, so different from what was naturally to be expected of *their* Messiah, his enemies, the Pharisees and Scribes, held to be a conclusive argument that he was no such Messiah as they expected, and therefore no Messiah at all: and this conviction they took every opportunity to impress, in like manner, on the multitude; laying hold of the fact, as a notorious instance of his carriage and deportment, yet furnishing a very ready and specious handle for being turned to his prejudice, and confirming both themselves and their followers in a common unbelief.

The word, γογγύζω, by which the evangelist describes the mode in which they gave vent to their remarks on our Lord's conduct in this instance, properly means to give vent to the feeling of complaint *aside;* to *insinuate* something, as such; and may be understood of what is addressed *underhand* and *clandestinely* to others, as well as of what is murmured apart to a man's self. If we attend to the force of the preposition compounded with the verb in this instance, and only in one more throughout the New Testament, (Luke xix. 7. on an occasion very like to the present,) διαγογγύζω will denote to spread such insinuations *abroad,* or *up and down;* and it will be here equivalent to διαθρυλλῆσαι or some such term. And in fact, the words of the insinuation itself, so uttered, ὅτι οὗτος ἁμαρτωλοὺς προσδέ-

tion one or two independent considerations, which would conspire to the same conclusion—that the

χεται, καὶ συνεσθίει αὐτοῖς—have more the appearance of what was said of and against our Saviour, to others *apart,* than openly before his face. Yet that he should be aware of it notwithstanding, would be just as much to be expected, as if it had been spoken openly; for it appears from various instances to that effect, that he was as well acquainted with what was passing in the minds of those about him, as with what was said by them; and with their observations in secret, as with what they spoke openly.

In reading the gospel history, it is of great importance to know beforehand, what was the actual purpose of our Saviour's preaching; and to what description of persons among his contemporaries, his ministry was addressed, in the hope of success, or with the professed design of effecting their conversion. I think this description of persons was never supposed to be the Scribes and the Pharisees, taken as a *body;* though there might be individual instances of exception. From these, neither his predecessor, John the Baptist (see Matth. iii. 7—10. Luke iii. 7—14.) nor he himself, ever expected a patient or impartial hearing; and neither of them, from the first, seems to have considered these the legitimate objects of his ministry, *for* whom, and *among* whom, he was to labour, in the discharge of his commission, with a reasonable prospect of success.

There are frequent occasions on record, when our Lord was brought into immediate contact or collision with this sect; there is none upon which his language, as addressed to them, is not rather that of exposure, rebuke, indignation or menace, as intended for persons whose impenitence was rooted, whose infidelity was confirmed and inveterate—than of expostulation, entreaty, persuasion or conciliation, as addressed to hearers, whose prejudices might be venial, whose errors were entitled to compassion, whose minds were still open to conviction, whose blindness was not incurable, and whose obstinacy did not amount to infatuation. The multitude at large, as sheep destitute of their proper shepherd, or as ignorant and deluded followers of guides as blind and ignorant, but not so innocent and guileless, as themselves, he pitied, and by every means in his power, strove to

true moral of the parable is strictly the future dispensations of Providence, in the promulgation of

rescue from the spiritual thraldom in which they were held. But it was otherwise with their leaders, whom he seems to have given up, as reprobate and incurable, from the first.

The hostility of the principal sects to our Lord was early conceived, and never relaxed. Their influence, and especially that of the Pharisees, which with the people was all powerful, was systematically directed to the single purpose of implicating and confirming them also, in their own unbelief. The whole of our Lord's public life was spent in counteracting the effects of this opposition. It was a contest between him and his adversaries, whether he by his miracles, discourses, and reasonings, or they by their artful and malicious misrepresentations of all that he did or said, should prevail with the nation at last: and might we conjecture the possibly different issue of a course of things, which could not indeed terminate otherwise; had this one sect set themselves with the same zeal to facilitate and promote his reception, as they did to thwart and discourage it; such were their influence and authority over the public mind, that the event, it may well be supposed, would have been accordingly. This sect then had the greater sin, and more to answer for than the simple fact of their own unbelief; as neither entering into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor yet allowing those that would: and that last and most animated of our Lord's invectives against them, which we have recorded in Matt. xxiii. delivered at the solemn conclusion of his personal ministry itself, is alone sufficient to attest both the guilt of that cumulative sin, which having been gradually contracted at every period of their preceding trial and probation, was arrived at its height, when all was over; and also the penal consequences which they had rendered themselves liable to by it, in the cumulative punishment which should fall on the heads of that *one* generation.

It is to be observed too, that frequently as our Lord may be seen to have defended himself against the attacks or calumnies of his enemies; it seems to have been not for the sake of convincing them, but of counteracting the effect of their calumnies and misrepresentations, on the people. The reply which he pub-

Christianity, and the extension of gospel privileges, to all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, without

licly made to the charge of his dispossessing demons by the concurrent agency of the prince or ruler of the demons, is a memorable instance of this truth: (see Matt. xii. 22—37: Mark iii. 22—30. Harm. P. iii. 13:) and from what he did upon that occasion, and why he did it, we are authorized to infer what he would do, or why he should do it, under the like circumstances, upon any other.

That charge was *specially* made to counteract the effect of a *specific* miracle, or at least a specific class of miracles; miracles of dispossession, which only were *a priori* liable to it. It was not made even by its authors, *ex animo;* or because they themselves believed in its truth; but merely as the best and most plausible contrivance to lower the credit of the miracle, without seeming to deny the fact of it; and by a show of reason, to impose on the credulity of the people, in lessening their admiration of the cause, without contradicting the evidence of their senses, in disputing the reality of the effect. If our Lord condescended to answer this charge by reasoning, so far as it required to be answered by reasoning, it was still for the sake of the people, to whose common sense he made a very plain and irresistible appeal, abundantly sufficient to convince them of the absurdity of the charge. But how does he deal with the authors of the charge itself, when he passes on to address them in their turn? In the language of the sternest, most vehement and most forcible rebuke—which confirms all that we have been assuming concerning the nature of his preconceived opinions of this class of men in particular; as utterly depraved and impenitent; utterly irreclaimable and incorrigible; who would stick at nothing to gratify their malice, and for the sake of traducing or injuring our Saviour, would not hesitate to malign and blaspheme the Holy Spirit of God himself.

If then, the object of his enemies in the present instance, was to disparage his reputation with the people at large; we may suppose, that, if he made any reply to their accusations, it would be, as for the conviction of the multitude, plainly and openly; and if he noticed the malice of their authors, whether directly or indirectly, it would be to rebuke and reprove it. He

regard to their personal distinctions at present; and the consequences of that indiscriminate exten-

did both these things, accordingly. The defence of his conduct, in the instance attacked, is contained in the illustrations or cases in point, on which he insists, Luke xv. 4—6. and 8, 9: the censure or reproof of his enemies, in the declaration actually subjoined on the first of these divisions of his discourse, at verse 7; and partly actually, partly virtually on the second, in verse 10.

The simplicity of these illustrations ought to offend no one. As addressed to persons of plain understandings, it rendered them so much the more intelligible; and as arguments *a fortiori* on the point in dispute, so much the more forcible. For the true ground of our Lord's vindication of his conduct from the censure cast upon it, is the incalculable value of an human soul; to recover which no condescension could be unworthy of him, who came to seek and to save the lost. The cavil of the Pharisees was founded in a total ignorance of the nature of the Christian mission; and of what was becoming or unbecoming the Saviour of mankind. But as to us, who possess a clear insight into both, and to whom, consequently, no circumstance of our Lord's behaviour appears more amiable, or more appropriate, than this very condescension towards sinners; any attempt of ours to excuse or justify what his enemies found fault with in it, would be an injury done to truth and decency itself.

To one of his hearers, at the time, however, this value of an human soul would be exemplified in a lively manner, by a contrast with things confessedly of small intrinsic price; much more, infinitely less in comparison with it; a single sheep, or a single drachma; (which anciently might very nearly be commensurate;) and the propriety of every effort, which might be made by any one in the hope of success, and much more by the great Physician of souls, the great Shepherd of the sheep, though at the expense of any pains and labour, any submission and condescension of his own, for the recovery of a lost soul, would be not less strikingly illustrated by the trouble and anxiety, which the loss of one sheep or one piece of money would cause to the owner, and the exertions which it would naturally induce him to make, without regard to his personal labour and fatigue, to find it, if possible, again.

It

sion, to the nature of their respective personal relations, in a spiritual point of view, hereafter.

It would impress them strongly also, with the conviction that the effect was worthy of the means, and the acquisition of all the condescension of the pursuit, to be told that the recovery of a single soul was as naturally a cause of joy in heaven, and even before the angels of God, as the recovery of a sheep, or a piece of money, the loss of which had given its owner so much concern, and the recovery of which again had cost him so much pains and trouble, was, of personal satisfaction and delight to himself, and good reason for sympathy and congratulation with him, on the part of his neighbours and acquaintances.

And that he is speaking expressly of what might be, and what was designed to be, the effect of this obnoxious part of his conduct itself, appears from his language, to describe the consequences of this effect, *χαρὰ ἔσται*, in the one instance, and *χαρὰ γίνεται*, in the other. This last expression is equivalent to *χαρὰ γίνεσθαι εἴωθεν*—and both it and the other describe the certain consequent of an hypothetical antecedent. If one sinner shall be but converted and repent, there *will be* joy in heaven; there *ensueth* joy, there *is wont to be* joy, before the angels of God.

But with regard to the declaration subjoined to these illustrations, especially at verse 7. *λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅτι χαρὰ ἔσται ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐπὶ ἑνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι, ἢ ἐπὶ ἐννενήκοντα ἐννέα δικαίοις, οἵτινες οὐ χρείαν ἔχουσι μετανοίας*—that it contains an oblique, but pointed, censure of the censurers themselves, may probably be made to appear, as follows.

That these words cannot with propriety be literally understood as conveying a general declaration, applicable to the case of moral agents indiscriminately, may be contended, first, because there is absolutely no such distinction between moral agents, as they would imply, of those who are righteous and stand in no need of repentance, and those who are not: the language of inspired truth is, there is *none* absolutely righteous, and therefore absolutely without need of repentance, *no not one:* secondly, because if there were, it is scarcely to be supposed that the perseverance of ninety-nine just persons, without the commission of sin, and without the necessity of repenting for it, should be less matter of joy and exultation to the angels of God, who take an interest

In the first place, the beauty of the parable itself, and the excellencies of its composition to which we

in the virtue and happiness of their fellow-creatures here below, than the conversion and restoration of but one sinner. To say that the declaration is made συγκαταβητικῶς and *more humano*, will not remove this difficulty, since it is delivered absolutely and without reserve, and therefore requires, we should suppose, to be understood in some sense, in which it will be true absolutely and without reserve: and though it may be consistent with human nature and experience, that what has been lost, and apparently lost for ever, when suddenly recovered, gives a more sensible pleasure than the secure enjoyment of what is many times perhaps as valuable, but has never been endangered, is felt to do; we do not know that the sympathies of angels, and much less those of the Supreme Being himself, are subject to any such law: since even in the case of men, the effect of such sympathies originates in weakness, in a temporary suspension of the power of reason over the passive emotions, and a partial hallucination of the judgment.

But, though there may be none who are actually righteous, and actually in no need of repentance, there may be many who consider themselves to be so: and in the strength of their presumed righteousness will not be persuaded to believe they stand in need of repentance. Now such was eminently the case with these Pharisees and Scribes; as Luke xvi. 15. and xviii. 9, prove. The phrase, too, χρείαν ἔχουσιν, is as capable of meaning *who* do not want, that is, who do not *think* they want—as *who* really do not want, or have no occasion for, such and such a thing; the former implying an independence of it, founded in the opinion of the parties, that is, in mere self-conceit; the latter, in the truth of the fact, or reason of the thing.

By the ninety and nine just persons, then, who have no need of repentance, as opposed even to one converted and repentant sinner, we may understand the Scribes and Pharisees; and should it be objected to this construction, that the word δικαίοις in that case must mean the *righteous in their own conceit;* the *self-righteous* as such—I answer, that many words or phrases there are, which occur both in the gospels, and in other parts of scripture, used ἁπλῶς, but requiring to be understood πρός τι—

adverted at the outset, and which place it at the head of the parables, are presumptively an argument, that if the distinctive qualities of our Lord's dis-

that is, with a certain emphasis and pregnancy of meaning different from usual. Thus, ἔχειν—for having, and using according to the natural design and purpose of the thing possessed—Mark iv. 25: Luke viii. 18: οἱ ἄνθρωποι, with the ellipsis of τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης, Matt. x. 17: μισεῖν, for an inferior degree of attachment to one thing, in comparison of an higher to another, Luke xiv. 26: σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν, meaning the wise and understanding in their own conceit, as plainly appears from the original in Isaiah, whence the words are taken, Matt. xi. 25. Luke x. 21: ἐκ τῶν λόγων σου δικαιωθήσῃ, καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων σου καταδικασθήσῃ, which must not be understood to the exception of a man's actions, as well, Matt. xii. 37. In like manner, δίκαιος may stand in a given instance for the self-righteous; as, in fact, it seems to do in that passage, Mark ii. 17, or Luke. v. 32, οὐκ ἦλθον, or ἐλήλυθα, καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλ' ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν.

Nor is it any objection, that under the appearance of comparison, or the assertion of an inferior degree of the same thing as compared with an higher, the phrase μᾶλλον ἤ in this instance must imply an absolute negation. For so it does, Luke xviii. 14, where the Pharisee, who had gloried in his fancied righteousness, so far from being justified or acknowledged for righteous, though in a less degree than the publican, who had confessed and bewailed his own sinfulness, was not justified at all, but remained in the sight of God even worse than he was before.

The point of the comparison then, in this instance also may be, not that there should be joy in heaven over ninety and nine such righteous persons as these, in any degree, though less than over one sinner that repented, but rather, no joy at all; and *per contra*, only too much reason to be sorry. That this construction renders the declaration ironical, I admit. But irony in the mouth of superior virtue and wisdom, when levelled against the opposite vice or folly, is dignified, though keen, rebuke: and instances of irony so employed by our Saviour himself, the account of his discourses in the gospels, especially when speaking to his enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, would supply in abundance, if it were necessary to produce them.

courses were no more arbitrary, or fortuitous, than those of his actions, a parable so elaborate, so pathetic, so exquisite, had probably an use and meaning, however concealed, yet peculiarly solemn and affecting. The intensity of personal interest, which the speaker himself could not have failed to take in his own narrative—the profound and mysterious importance of the subject—the combination of pain and pleasure, of joy and melancholy, of hope and apprehension, necessarily associated with it—might perhaps account for the beauty and pathos of the present parable, if it related to a topic of futurity so auspicious on the one hand, as the readoption of the Gentiles into the family of faith, after so long an exclusion from it, and so ominous on the other, as the rejection and banishment of the Jews from the bosom of the same communion, after so long and exclusive a right of possession in it.

Again, the progressiveness of prophetical revelation, with reference to the same or to cognate subjects, would lead us to expect that the whole truth with respect to a certain future œconomy like this, would not be disclosed at once; but in the course of time and successively. The reception of the Gentiles into the same communion as the Jews, hereafter, *along* with them, but not to the *entire* exclusion of them, we have seen to be foretold on former occasions, in the course of the gospel history. The further fact in the consequences of this dispensation, that the reception of the Gentiles would be the rejection of the Jews, because of their disinclination to coalesce with them in an equality of privileges—has not yet been made the subject of an express revelation: and the present parable, with such a con-

struction of its moral, as we suppose, would but supply that omission.

It was antecedently probable that the great *mystery* or *secret*, as scripture emphatically styles it, of the future reunion of the Gentile world to the common household and family of faith, whatever might be its consequences to the Jews in particular, would sometime, in the course of the Christian ministry, be made known on no less an authority than that of our Lord himself: in which case, that it would be communicated under the disguise of allegory, from regard to the prejudices both of the believing and of the unbelieving part of his contemporaries, was just as much to be expected; of the former, from pity or condescension, lest their prejudices should be shocked by the premature disclosure of a truth, which even they could not have borne as yet; of the latter, as neither able to bear, nor in fact worthy to receive, the express communication whether of this, or of any other, future truth.

The probability of the third hypothesis of the moral of the parable is *prima facie* such, that we have only to propose the explanation, along with the history to be explained by it, to see that it is exactly suited, and exactly commensurate to it. We have a double history in the allegory; and we have a double history in the interpretation. The character of the elder brother is not less apposite to the Jew, than that of the younger is to the Gentile: nor the several particulars of the history of either to its supposed counterpart, than those of the other. A future matter of fact, too, like that which is implied in this hypothesis, was naturally, *a priori*, adapted both to illustrate and be illustrated by such a repre-

sentation as that of the parable. For what can be more congruous to the real state of the case, as well as more engaging and beautiful *per se*, than the parabolic representation both of Jew and Gentile under the common relation of members of the same family, children of the same father; and by the common tie of a common origin, the brothers one of the other? Referred to the truth and simplicity of such a relation, the distinction of an elder or a younger son, however apposite and significant in another point of view, is yet accidental and unimportant. Difference of age, or rights of primogeniture, cannot be taken into account, where identity of relation, and community of original, alone are to be considered. How congruous also, to the fundamental notion of such a community, as well as how simple and natural in itself, was the idea of delineating the past or the future dealings of God towards the Jew and the Gentile respectively, under the difference of fortune supposed to characterise the history of two brothers—depending as much on the conduct and deportment of either towards the other as a brother, as upon that of the father towards both as his children.

Upon the assumption of the truth of this hypothesis, too, the principle of association would enable us to shew, that as the parable followed on the preceding discourse, so it might naturally have arisen out of it, and from the circumstances connected with it. We have only to presume that the divine œconomy of grace, in reference to the Gentiles, which should hereafter be revealed and carried into effect, was suggested by what had recently happened, or was present to our Saviour's mind at the time, and we

explain the original conception of the parable. The nature of that transaction was capable of producing this association of the future with the present, and so leading to the allegorical portraiture of it in which it is so beautifully adumbrated.

It is no violent straining of analogies to suppose that the odium in which the publicans and sinners, as one part of the Jewish community, were held by the Scribes and Pharisees, as another, was a just type of the odium in which the Gentiles at large were held by the Jews at large. It is no straining of an hypothesis to contend that the inferiority, in such and such respects, whether real or imaginary, in which these publicans and sinners stood, or were supposed to stand, in comparison of the Scribes and Pharisees; might denote the inferiority of moral excellence, or religious privileges, and of favour and acceptance with God, in which the Gentiles stood, or were believed to stand, in comparison of the Jews. It is no violence to analogy to admit that the humility and teachableness of publicans and sinners, contrasted with the pride and blindness of Scribes and Pharisees, did aptly enough prefigure that welcome reception which the Gentile would be found to accord to the same saving gospel truth, which should not obtain an hearing, much less a ready admission, from the Jew. Still less repugnant to analogy is it, to suppose that the offence taken by a part of the Jews, and those, the unbelieving and impenitent in particular, at the indulgence and condescension evinced by our Saviour to another—the more docile, penitent, and open to conviction—might be a just type, and naturally capable of suggesting the idea, of that mortal scandal, which the whole nation of

the Jews, while they persisted in their own infidelity, should hereafter contract, upon the extension of the privilege which they considered peculiarly their own, to the Gentiles—the privilege of standing in the relation of the children of Abraham, of the heirs of the promises, and of the chosen people of God[p].

THE INTERPRETATION.

The foundation of the history was the fact first mentioned; A certain man had two sons: on which it was an obvious remark, that though there could be only one father, there might have been more than two sons. The reason for thus restricting the number of members belonging to the same family, who are supposed to stand to its head in the relation of children, must now appear; if by the father or head of the family we are at liberty to understand the Creator of mankind, and by the sons or subordinate parts of the family, the two comprehensive divisions of his moral creatures, into the Jews and the Gentiles. Nor, after the call of Abraham, is any other

[p] The general consent of the Christian church in Tertullian's time, explained the two brethren as typical the one of the Jew, the other of the Christian. It is true, he himself opposes this explanation; but solely on the ground that the language of the elder brother to his father, Lo so many years am I serving thee, and never have transgressed a command of thine, cannot hold good of the Jew. But this objection makes no allowance for the irritation of the moment: and in what sense the assertion may be even literally true of the Jews, (at least in our Saviour's time,) will appear hereafter. In any case, as long as the Jews still continued to retain their relation to God as his peculiar people, so long they must be supposed still to be serving him, in some sense or other, to his satisfaction, and still not to be transgressing his commandments.

division of mankind recognised in scripture, than into the posterity of Abraham and the children of the Gentiles; nor, after the settlement of the Jews in a country of their own, any other partition of the world, than into the land of Israel and the countries of the Gentiles.

Where the relation of a father, as such, is alone regarded, it is, and must be, the same in respect to any one of his children as to the rest; and where the relation of a son alone is taken into account, it is the same in one brother as in another. To the relation of a father on the one hand, it is indifferent whether there is one son, or more; and to that of sons on the other, which is the elder and which is the younger brother. It was not possible to express with more exact propriety the nature of the personal relation of the Creator to his creatures, than by that of a father to his children; nor consequently the reciprocal relation of the creatures to the Creator, than by that of children to their father. In this point of view, both Jew and Gentile become identified, and retain no individual or distinctive character, either of them more than the other. If God was by creation the Father of all, then all mankind was one family, of which he was the head, and the various nations of the world were the members. The apostle, St. Paul, could tell his Gentile auditors at Athens, with no less truth in the assertion of the fact, than novelty in the apprehension of his hearers, to whom of all others the statement of such a truth would be most surprising—that God had made every nation of mankind of one blood, that is, of the blood of one pair [q]; and in the circumstance of their origin respec-

[q] Acts xvii. 16.

tively, there was no distinction of one from another, whatever there might be in other things. All were brothers, because all were the children of the same parents; all were equal, because all distinctions between the children of the same parents, except those of age, and the honorary, rather than real, preeminence which attaches to priority of birth, are unnatural and unjust. The Jew, as only one of the children of Adam, was no better than the Gentile; the Greek, than the barbarian; the freeman, than the slave.

It was implied, that for a longer or a shorter period, before the commencement of the parabolic transaction, the members of this one family had lived uninterruptedly together; the father in the enjoyment of both his children, the brothers in each other's society, under the same paternal roof. In like manner, before the time of that separation of one family, and of their descendants, which God was pleased to make from the rest of the world—the identity of his relation to *all* his rational creation on earth, was at yet unmodified by the assumption of a new and peculiar relation to one part of them, distinct from the rest; and all mankind must still be considered as forming but one family, not yet broken into its separate or component parts. Nor until the period of the same separation, do we know that there was any difference in the moral condition, or the religious circumstances of mankind; nor therefore in the nature of that spiritual relation, wherein all were still placed, to their common Creator. From the time of Adam to that of Noah, and from the time of Noah to the call of Abraham, there was no such difference with regard to the recipients or ob-

jects, the matter or subjects, the measure, degrees, or manner of revealed religious truth, as was thenceforward seen to exist, when one people had been chosen to be the depositaries of the divine communications, exclusively of all besides. During the œconomy of the antediluvian world, when the lifetime of the first father of mankind almost extended to the deluge, and an interval of an hundred years only was necessary to make Adam contemporary with Noah; the light possessed by the first pair of mankind must have been reflected without diminution to their posterity: and after the deluge, the descendants of the second father of mankind were placed on a similar footing; for the remainder of the life of Noah extended beyond the birth of Abraham himself. The spiritual knowledge, possessed by him, would therefore descend as a common inheritance to his posterity; to be used or abused; to be improved or impaired; to be retained or lost; according to their different personal apprehensions of its value, and their different personal inclinations to turn it to a better or a worse account.

It is agreeable to this supposition, that the particular patrimony of the younger son was the same in kind, as that of the elder; the same substance, (οὐσία,) the same fortune or living, (βίος,) was divided in certain proportions between them. Nor were they merely the same in kind, but apparently equal in degree. In allotting their respective parts of the inheritance to each of his children, no such distinction was seen to be made by the father, as that of a younger and an elder brother's portion; the right of primogeniture, and the privileges annexed to that relation, consisted in the elder son's staying at home,

while the younger went abroad—the inheritor consequently not only of the remaining half of his father's property, but of every addition which might afterwards be made to it, while his brother continued abroad. Now the patrimony, or inheritance, supposed to belong to a family of which God in the relation of Creator, is the head, and mankind in that of his creatures, are the members, must necessarily be considered to stand for that knowledge of himself—of his nature and attributes, of his proper relation to his creatures, and of theirs to him, and by virtue of a common relation to a common Creator, of their particular relations to themselves and to each other—and of the several duties which are instinctively felt to flow from the fact of these several relations, whether in reference to their Creator, to themselves, or to others—which we may call the amount of religious, social, or personal truth; in a word, of moral or spiritual light—which whether natural or revealed, whether discoverable by human reason and furnished by the consciences of God's moral creatures for themselves, or directly derived from above, is yet in either case, mediately or immediately, to be referred to God. In the kind or degrees of this light, among men, there was no difference up to the time when God was pleased to begin to manifest himself after a special manner to one part of the descendants of Noah, but not to the rest. Whatever acquaintance with the true God, and whatever knowledge of religious, social, or personal duty, even Abraham possessed before his call; all his contemporaries, as alike the posterity of Noah, and alike in possession of the spiritual patrimony

derived from him, either had, or might have had, in common with him.

From the time when the younger son journeyed into a far country, and began to reside there, the elder continuing still at home; in respect to proximity of personal abode, as referred to the locality of their native home, and in respect to closeness of personal connexion, as referred to the common relation of children; the case of the two brothers, became the one the reverse of the other. The personal residence of the elder son was still ἐγγὺς or near at hand, in respect of home, while that of the younger was εἰς μακρὰν or afar off: the elder brother was still an inmate of the family, and still as closely connected with the father, in his proper character and relation of a son, while the younger had ceased to belong to the one, and was virtually become an alien in blood from the other.

In like manner, from the period of the separation of the descendants of Abraham to be exclusively the people of God; the proper scriptural denomination for the rest of the world, begins to be οἱ εἰς μακρὰν, or they that were afar off; and consequently that of the Jews the contrary one of οἱ ἐγγὺς[r], or they that were nigh at hand. For the consequence of this selection of one people, as parties in a federal union with God, and depositaries of revealed religious truth, was to bring that one people *close to God;* to place them in his immediate presence, and under his own eye and inspection; to invest them with peculiar sanctity, and to give them peculiar claims upon his providence, his regard, and protection. And

[r] Cf. Acts. ii. 39. xxii 21. Ephes. ii. 12, 13.

this dispensation in favour of *one* part of mankind would have directly the contrary effect on the *remainder;* banishing them as it were, from his presence; hiding them in comparison of the other, from his view; removing them far beyond the sphere of that personal interest which he was pledged to take, and that personal part which he was covenanted to sustain, in the affairs of his chosen people; and exempting them consequently even from his providential care and superintendence, in all but its ordinary, or indirect and insensible dispensations, at least; as compared with its special interposition in behalf of the Jews.

The proper share of the common inheritance which the younger son took with him abroad, was all he could have to subsist upon, wheresoever he fixed his abode; and though adequate to keep him from want, and by good management, capable perhaps of being increased, yet it could not be competent to maintain him in idleness and dissipation, and by wastefulness and prodigality was sure to be consumed at last.

And whatever degree of light and knowledge the Gentile world might possess before the call of Abraham, upon that were they left to depend for their moral and religious responsibility—for the due information of their faith, and the due regulation of their practice, for the discovery and discharge in short, of their spiritual, social, or personal obligations—when the call of that patriarch had once taken place. The choice of a single family, and afterwards of a single people, as the organs of communication between the Deity and his moral creatures, rendered it necessary that every subsequent

revelation, as such, whatever might be its object—all the disclosures of the divine will—should be made thenceforward in the same definite channel, and for the same definite purpose, both *to* the people so chosen, and *through* them. It would have been incompatible with the exclusiveness of their proper relation, and injurious to the rights which they had acquired by it; had the Deity extended the same privilege to the rest of the world, of revealing himself as familiarly to them as to the Jews, or of treating all the orders and divisions of his moral and responsible creatures, from the time when he had set apart one for particular purposes, with the same impartiality as before.

The selection of a particular family and their descendants, to be the proper recipients of revelations hereafter to be made, would doubtless have no retrospective effect, in depriving the rest of the world of so much of light and certainty, both in religion and morals, as they were previously possessed of; but it would have a prospective one, in preventing any addition being made to it, at least from the same source, or in the same way, as before. Whatever were the advantages, moral or spiritual, which they possessed and retained, up to the time of that selection, these they might use or abuse, might cherish or neglect, might long preserve unimpaired, or speedily allow to go to ruin, as they thought fit. They might be adequate to their direction, both on points of faith and on questions of practice, if duly applied; they might be capable of improvement, if diligently cultivated; but if neglected, they must gradually wane away and diminish; if lost, they could not be recovered; if extinguished, their light

was not to be rekindled. We read of no revelations vouchsafed to the Gentiles—no prophets commissioned for their benefit and instruction—from the time when God began to converse with one people, in the Jews, and to employ messengers, expressly to make known his will to them.

The separation of the younger son from his paternal home was a voluntary act, and the effect which he contemplated by his separation, was not a temporary but a perpetual absence. Nor was the motive which induced him to form this resolution, if we may judge from his subsequent conduct, resolvable into the mere inexperience, the natural feelings, the ardour and curiosity of youth ; but into something much less excusable, and as much at variance with moral obligations as with filial duty; the impatience of control, from the restrictions of parental authority—the desire of illicit enjoyments; in a word, the extravagance of youthful passions, now grown unruly and inordinate, which put him on seeking their gratification at a distance from home, where they might freely be indulged, without the sense of shame and without the fear of punishment.

We may apply this representation to the case of the Gentile world, by alleging the historical fact which answers to it, that the first corruptions of true religion, the first deviation from the strictness of moral rectitude, if not every subsequent addition to them, among the nations of antiquity, arose more out of the perversity of the human imagination, the wickedness of the human heart, and the obliquity of the human will, than from the inadequacy of the powers of reason, the absence or obscurity of necessary light,

the weakness or indeterminateness of the sense of obligation in matters of practice, the defectiveness or uncertainty of intellectual knowledge and conviction in questions of faith or speculation. A right belief, and a corresponding purity of practice; false notions of religious truth, and consequent laxity of manners, and personal immorality of conduct—have always been the genuine offsprings one of the other, and kept pace together. The moral restraints, so offensive to the tendencies of a corrupt nature, which are inseparable from a just conception of the nature and attributes of God, and constitute in practice the religious duty and homage of his responsible creatures—without which they can neither acquit themselves of their proper obligations towards him, nor yet expect to please him—are proved both by the reason of things, and by the testimony of holy writ, and by the historical evidence of the progress of corruption both in religion and in morals every where, to have been the earliest and most universal of the causes, which vitiated the truth of that primitive faith transmitted by Adam to the antediluvian, and by Noah to the postdiluvian world, as well as which debauched the moral sense, and obliterated or weakened the instinctive recognition of the eternal laws of decency and virtue, which God had stamped upon the consciences of men.

At no period of his existence, has mankind been placed in what is falsely called the state of nature; and which had it ever a being, must have been a state the most contrary to nature imaginable: at no period of his existence, consequently, and much less at the period when he first came into being, was he destitute of light, immediately derived from above,

to direct him both to the discovery of the true God, and to the knowledge of his own duty, as founded upon his proper relations to him. It would be absurd to suppose that the Creator left himself without witness to the creature, just at the moment when he issued from his hands; and while the relation between himself and them, if ever, was strictly that of the father and his first-born son. It would be scarcely less absurd to suppose that the personal acquaintance with his Maker, possessed by Adam, was not transmitted by him to his children; or that those immediate consequences of that acquaintance, to their spiritual, social, and personal relations, which were known and felt by him, were not equally known and felt by them.

Nor with regard to his posterity at any distance of remoteness from the fountainhead, was it because God himself was unwilling to be known to the Gentile world, or because the knowledge of God was no longer capable of being attained to by them, but because, as the apostle testifies[s], they did not like to retain him in their knowledge themselves; they did not choose to draw those inferences, concerning his invisible things, even his eternal power and Godhead, which were so plainly legible in the works of his hands, from the foundation of the world; that he gave them up at last to a reprobate mind, incapable alike of just conclusions in reasoning, and of right predilections in practice; which neither staggered at the errors of the most monstrous faith, nor revolted from the enormities of the most abominable conduct.

In the personal history therefore, of the younger son, after he had once renounced the protection of his

[s] Rom. i. 28.

father's dwelling—the only safeguard of his innocence and virtue—the connexion of false religion with corrupt morals, and of wrong principles of belief with as depraved habits of life, is plainly pointed out. If *he* is seen to break loose from restraint, and to run riot in extravagance, squandering his patrimony, greater or less as it might originally have been, upon the indulgence of his pleasures, or as it is also expressed, in the company of harlots; so was it with the *Gentile world*, once exempted from the safe-guidance and control of true religion, and abandoned to the empire of idolatry and superstition. The evil principles of humanity, the tendencies, desires, and impulses of a corrupt nature, more especially the sensual and voluptuous (though not unaccompanied by the cruel, the sanguinary, the malicious also) began to predominate over reason, or rather to reduce reason to a slavish submission; and to call for indulgence without scruple and without moderation; nay even as matter of duty, and on the principle of religious obligation itself. For it was thought by the votaries of heathen superstition, anciently, that they could not better please the objects of their worship, nor better testify their reverence of them, than by such outrages on nature and humanity, and such abominations and impurities, as though fully justified by the history and example of their gods themselves, were alike offensive to reason, and repugnant to the instincts of conscience. Pleasures, which may fitly be denoted by the name of harlots[t], or every variety of false religion, as opposed

[t] The devising of idols, says the Book of Wisdom, was the beginning of *spiritual* fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life; xiv. 12: cf. verses 23—26.

to true, comprehended under the general idea of the polytheism of antiquity, to which scripture gives the same metaphorical denomination—as fair externally, and as fascinating to the eye of sense, as harlots, but withal as corrupting to innocence, as degrading to reason, as incompatible with virtue, as they; not less dangerous to the health of the mind, to the purity and integrity of the moral sense, than the society of courtesans to the health of the body, and the expensive enjoyments of the prodigal to the security and safe-keeping of property—became the exclusive objects of men's attachment, men's desires and devotions—for which they lived, and in which they placed their religious duty, their personal happiness and gratification. The history of idolatry, in ancient times, and of its effects upon public and private morals, were it to be minutely investigated, would only confirm the truth of this representation.

The patrimony of the elder son, after the depar-

Every one is, no doubt, familiar with the description of pleasure in Xenophon's beautiful narrative of the Choice of Hercules. In the Tabula of Cebes also, the vices are represented as *πορναί*. Thus cap. 6: *ἔτι δὲ οὐχ ὁρᾷς ἔνδον τῆς πύλης πλῆθός τι γυναικῶν, ἑταιρῶν παντοδαπὰς μορφὰς ἐχουσῶν; ὁρῶ. αὗται τοίνυν, Δόξαι, καὶ Ἐπιθυμίαι, καὶ Ἡδοναὶ καλοῦνται. ὅταν οὖν εἰσπορεύηται ὁ ὄχλος, ἀναπηδῶσιν αὗται, καὶ περιπλέκονται πρὸς ἕκαστον, εἶτα ἀπάγουσι. κ', τ. λ.* Again, cap. 11: *ὁρᾷς οὖν, ὡς ἂν παρελθῃς τὴν πύλην ταύτην, ἀνώτερον ἄλλον περίβολον, καὶ γυναῖκας ἔξω τοῦ περιβόλου ἑστηκυίας, κεκοσμημένας ὥσπερ ἑταίρας εἰώθασι; καὶ μάλα. αὗται τοίνυν, ἡ μὲν Ἀκρασία καλεῖται, ἡ δὲ Ἀσωτία, ἡ δὲ Ἀπληστία, ἡ δὲ Κολακεία. τί οὖν ὧδε ἑστήκασιν αὗται; παρατηροῦσιν, ἔφη, τοὺς εἰληφότας τι παρὰ τῆς τύχης. εἶτα τί; ἀναπηδῶσι καὶ συμπλέκονται αὐτοῖς, καὶ κολακεύουσι, καὶ ἀξιοῦσι παρ' αὐταῖς μένειν, λέγουσαι ὅτι βίον ἕξουσιν ἡδὺν, καὶ ἄπονον, καὶ κακοπάθειαν ἔχοντα οὐδεμίαν.*

ture of the younger, was daily increasing, while that of the younger was daily diminishing—the source of the increase being the steady prosecution of his usual occupations at home, while his brother was leading a life of riot abroad, and the rate of the increase on the one hand being proportional to the rate of the decrease on the other; so that, whatever might have been the equality between them at first, the patrimony of the elder brother was greatest when that of the younger was least; and was still capable of being augmented when the other was already evanescent, and could cease to become less only by being reduced to nothing. And however various might be the revelations made by the Deity to his chosen people; however great and ample their sum and substance, as taken all together—they might have been more numerous, and might have amounted to more, had he pleased; and those which he did vouchsafe were gradual and successive. None of them was prior to the separation of the Gentiles from the family of faith, and all were confined to the duration of that separation. They began with Abraham, but they ended only with the last of the prophets, whether Malachi, or John the Baptist; between which extremes, there is on record not only an uninterrupted series of divine communications to the same people, but in most instances such, that a later improves and expands, carries on and enlarges, fills up and completes, as well as follows upon a former.

At the very point of time, when the property of the prodigal being reduced to nothing by his extravagance already, he was become destitute of the ordinary means of subsistence; there happened a grievous dearth, that is, a season of unusual scarcity,

in the country where he was sojourning. The fact of such a famine, coinciding with this period in his history, finds an appropriate counterpart in that universal corruption of religion, and depravity of life and conversation, which about the time of our Lord's advent had overspread the face of the earth, like a plague-sore, or like the foulest and deepest leprosy—and had infected society as far as refinement and civilization extended. We may appeal to all who are conversant in ancient history, and more particularly who have paid any attention to the minutiæ of domestic life, the tone and standard of private manners, the turn and character of the fashionable philosophy, as well as to the grosser and more palpable evidence of public licentiousness, and of the absurdities or enormities of the established religion, in these times; whether there was ever a period when the understandings of men were more deluded and enslaved, or their moral principles more debauched and vitiated—when there was less of true religion and of corresponding virtuous practice, and more of the opposites of either—in the world, than now. Had the Gentile preserved for any length of time before, his original share, however small, of the patrimony which was once the birthright of all the children of Noah, yet, like the inheritance of the prodigal, it was now totally dissipated and gone. We have only to read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and to compare it with the histories, and the other authentic documents of the nature of these times, which still remain, to be satisfied that the picture which it draws is copied from the truth, and is not more striking and forcible, than correct and faithful. The moral and religious degeneracy

of the period when the birth of Christ took place, and the Christian dispensation was formally begun, is, in fact, one of the most characteristic circumstances of that πλήρωμα καιροῦ, or fulness of the season, before which the commencement of such a dispensation could not be anticipated, nor after it delayed; the former, perhaps, as not necessary until then, the latter as only too necessary at the time. For such was the state of things, at this juncture, that it is not too much to say, the world must either be regenerated, if it was still to continue—to make its continuance compatible with the moral government of God—or, if it could not be regenerated, neither could it any longer be tolerated, but for the same reason, that is, out of regard to the justice, goodness, and holiness of the same moral Governor, it must have been destroyed.

The privations which the prodigal would have to encounter in this season of dearth, were the reverse of the profusion and self-indulgence, in which he had rioted without restraint heretofore; and so far his sin was visited in kind, and by his personal experience of the bitter consequences of want, he was made sensible of the true value of his former abundance, and of his own folly, in not esteeming and cherishing it, while his own, as it deserved. Now, in being the penal consequence of a previous wanton wastefulness, and of the voluntary appropriation even of his own property to an use and purpose, so contrary to its original intention and becoming application, all this corresponds to what the apostle declares to have been the consequence and effect of that universal degeneracy which preceded the promulgation of Christianity, considered not only as the

natural result of the course of things in the moral world, until then, but as the judicial resentment in kind of the wilful neglect of lights and convictions, previously possessed; of the voluntary renunciation of former and better principles; of the knowledge derived from tradition, the conclusions and dictates of reason, the remonstrances and warnings of conscience, the evidences of the senses themselves, all slighted and spurned. "Because they did not like "to retain God in *their* knowledge; therefore he "gave them over to a reprobate mind[u]; to work all "uncleanness with greediness[x]:" and what depths of infamy, what extremity of wretchedness and profligacy, what reckless insensibility to shame and decency, human nature is capable of, in that state of judicial reprobation, appears from the particular exemplification of its ultimate effects upon the principles and practice of society, which is given in those parts of the epistles, already referred to, and in divers others also.

In the last extremity of personal distress, the prodigal attached himself to the service of a citizen of that country: where, while the act of attaching himself to this master was voluntary, the word which expresses the nature of the union ensuing upon it, is one of a pregnant meaning, and denotes the closest conjunction. It is employed in another instance, to describe the nearest and most indissoluble of connexions, which one man can form with another of his species, the union of the husband with the wife; on which, when it has taken place, the declaration is subjoined, "And they two shall be for one flesh[y]."

[u] Rom i. 28. [x] Ephes iv. 19.

[y] Matt. xix. 5: Mark x. 7, 8. Harm. P. iv. 50.

Now, if the person of the prodigal denotes, as we have all along supposed, the Gentile world; then the lord to whose service he is finally reduced, and that in a state of implicit submission and absolute dependence, may without impropriety be conceived to represent the god of that world, the prince of the powers of darkness; the same being whom, under a variety of names, and as many attributes and relations, all the systems of idolatry anciently concurred to worship. Nor, if we consider the community of nature, the unity of will and purpose, the combination of personal agency, which subsist between the head of those powers in common, and his subordinate members individually; if we take into account the resemblance of all false religions to each other, as equally opposed to the true; the compatibility of any one of the multiform varieties of polytheism with the rest, as well as the common and individual repugnancy of each to the worship of the one true God; will it make any difference to the propriety of the representation, if we understand by this *one citizen* of the country in question, some one in particular of the many members of a common head, and the many subjects of a common lord and master, Satan; each of whom had his peculiar worshippers among the different nations of antiquity, and his particular jurisdiction as the tutelary god of some one of the different countries of the Gentiles. For as there must have been many citizens in the same country, where the prodigal was residing; so were there gods many, and lords many, in the communities of the heathen world, all alike opposed to, and alike distinct from, the one true God and supreme Lord, worshipped only among the Jews.

Nor did the prodigal, as we may observe, contract this abject relation to such a master, until he had spent his all, and was compelled by sheer necessity to submit to any personal degradation whatever. And it is a further characteristic of the fulness of the season, when the Son of God appeared in the flesh, to destroy, as he himself has told us, the works of the Devil, that never before was the empire of Satan, over mankind, more absolute, nor the strong holds of spiritual wickedness in high places, to all appearance, more firmly established. The Gentile world having ceased to be willingly the *servants* of righteousness, were become necessarily the *slaves* of sin. The setting of the last glimpse of the true light had left a total darkness behind it. The apostasy of mankind from God was apparently complete; the debasement of their moral and intellectual nature seemed to have reached its lowest pitch. There was nothing more absurd or irrational, to be proposed for belief, that was not even then an article of the popular creed; nothing more abandoned, enormous, and profligate, to be instanced in practice, that was not both permitted and exemplified already.

The only employment which this self-chosen master could furnish his new servant, in the parable, was the keeping of swine; an apt representation of the kind of wages, in the shape of indulgence—which the service of sin, that is, the empire of idolatry and superstition, notwithstanding the specious promises of gratification which it seems to hold out, notwithstanding those tempting lures and wiles by which it works upon the desires and longings of a corrupt nature, is still able to accord to its votaries; and

what sort of compliances they are, which Satan every where requires from his subjects, as the price of the very pleasures of which he permits them to taste [z]. Reason and experience conspire to assure us, that such an empire must be, and always has been, founded on the ruin of whatsoever is noble and dignified—as well as pure and decent—in human nature; in the prostration of the understanding before the grossest delusions, and the prostitution of the heart and will to the vilest, the basest, and most brutish of passions.

Even in this disgusting occupation, and earning the bread of his own infamy, the prodigal was still not exempt from want. He would have satisfied his hunger on the coarsest and meanest food, yet could not obtain enough of that: a striking picture not only of the intrinsic depravity, but of the vain and illusory character of the enjoyments of sin; not only of the real infamy and turpitude of those services which Satan exacts from his vassals, but of the poor and sordid and unsatisfactory recompense with which he repays them. What other representation could more justly have described the true nature of slavish and sensual appetites; ever restless and importunate, until gratified, yet still unsatiated by in-

[z] In the Tabula of Cebes, before referred to, cap. xi. the allegory proceeded; *ἐὰν οὖν τις πεισθῇ ὑπ' αὐτῶν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ἡδυπάθειαν, μέχρι μέν τινος ἡδεῖα δοκεῖ εἶναι ἡ διατριβὴ, ἐὼς ἂν γαργαλίζῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπον· εἶτ' οὐκ ἔτι· ὅταν γὰρ ἀνανήψῃ, αἰσθάνεται ὅτι οὐκ ἤσθιεν, ἀλλ' ὑπ' αὐτῆς κατησθίετο καὶ ὑβρίζετο. διὸ καὶ ὅταν ἀναλώσῃ πάντα, ὅσα ἔλαβε παρὰ τῆς τύχης, ἀναγκάζεται ταύταις ταῖς γυναιξὶ δουλεύειν, καὶ πάνθ' ὑπομένειν, καὶ ἀσχημονεῖν, καὶ ποιεῖν ἕνεκεν τούτων ὅσα ἐστὶ βλαβερά· οἷον, ἀποστερεῖν, ἱεροσυλεῖν, ἐπιορκεῖν, προδιδόναι, λητίζεσθαι, καὶ πάνθ' ὅσα τούτοις παραπλήσια· ὅταν οὖν πάντα αὐτοῖς ἐπιλίπῃ, παραδίδυνται τῇ Τιμωρίᾳ.*

dulgence; feeding at all times on the grossest fare, yet perpetually ravenous for more? What could better have illustrated to the life the situation of a world abandoned by grace, and morally dead in trespasses and sins; yet unconscious of its own desperate state, and as reckless of shame as impenetrable to compunction, working all uncleanness with greediness?

Hopeless and forlorn as the case of the prodigal might seem, when reduced to this last extremity, it became in the merciful hands of Providence, the instrumental means of his reformation: the worst part of his condition at least immediately preceded his recovery: and we have already observed that the same thing holds good of the religious and moral degeneracy, to which the Gentile world had been finally brought, just before the formal commencement of the very dispensation, designed for its renovation and amendment. The night is never more dark, than when the day is on the point of dawning: the recovery of a patient whose disorder has gone on progressively to a certain stage, is never more doubtful, than just before the crisis arrives. When the great moral disease, which infected the frame of society through the Gentile world, had reached its height, and produced its last and worst effect; the remedy also prepared for its cure, was ready to act. The period in the history of mankind, at which the ascendancy of ignorance, of irreligion, and immorality, was the most complete, was precisely the season made choice of by God, for the disclosure of his last, his best, his fullest and most effectual revelation, to instruct and enlighten, to guide and as-

sist, to purify and reform, to exalt and ennoble his creatures.

Solitude, privation, and reflection, the harsh but salutary discipline of adversity, were the producing causes of a change for the better in the temper and disposition of the prodigal; as divine grace, by its preventive operation, producing the consciousness of their own situation, and working upon that conviction—among other causes of the effect, may be supposed to have brought about the conversion of the Gentile world, or prepared it at least for that reformation of its moral and spiritual condition, which was about to ensue. Severe and painful might be the process, by which the prodigal was brought to himself, and restored to reason and sobriety, from the intoxication of his former career; deep and humiliating the reflections which, on the first dawn of returning consciousness, arose in his mind to overwhelm him with shame for the past, and self-reproach: and let any one read the strong, the impassioned, and expressive description of St. Paul's, in the eighth of Romans, where all nature is represented as sympathising together in the sense of the moral, as well as the physical evil, to which it is subject in the present state; and say whether the sufferings of an universe—even as awakened to the sense of its condition, yet still doomed to groan under the bondage of its own corruption, with nothing to relieve its sufferings, but the hope and prospect of a future emancipation into the enjoyment of liberty, worthy of the creature of God, and of a purification to come, for the recovery of an original holiness—were less pungent and severe.

The plenty which continued to reign in his native home, amidst all this dearth abroad; a plenty diffusing itself to the meanest of the family, as well as to the highest, and to his father's servants as much as to his son; contrasted with his own miserable pittance, so harsh and so distasteful, yet so scanty and inadequate to his present need; so grudgingly bestowed, yet so incompetent to satisfy the cravings of nature; were the reflections naturally obtruded on the prodigal, by his situation itself: and could any honest and humbleminded Gentile, before the time arrived for the diffusion of gospel light and life all over the world—deeply sensible of his moral and spiritual privations, have been made aware of the superior advantages, both for informing the understanding in all needful religious knowledge, and for directing the conduct in all necessary practical emergencies, possessed by the Jew; doubtless such a conviction would have disposed him to envy those advantages, and to congratulate their good fortune who enjoyed them, in comparison of his own. He would have been ready to exclaim, with the Psalmist; "Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case: *yea*, "happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD [a]."

Though the conscience of the young man, under the recollection of the past, sufficiently intimated that he had justly forfeited all right to the name and privileges of a son; yet he had still the hope left of being restored to his home, in the character and relation of a servant. Many were the menials of that home, to all whose wants it was more than adequate. The door which was open to the reception of strangers, would not be closed against a peni-

[a] Psalm cxliv. 15.

tent son, who sought admission in no other capacity; the table which furnished their daily bread to so many domestics, would have enough and to spare for one more. And had the Gentile, even when admitted into the family of God again, along with the Jew, been placed on an inferior and humbler footing; had any visible distinction in regard to honour, preeminence, dignity, been made between them and the existing people of God, who had so long enjoyed a prescriptive right to the chief place in his favour—could the Gentile with reason have murmured against it? would it have been inconsistent with what was antecedently to be expected, from the actual difference of his own circumstances, and the actual disparity of his own relations to God, compared with those of the Jews, before their formation into one family and brotherhood of faith?

And if by these *hired servants*, that part of the inmates of the native home of the prodigal, who were distinct both from his father and his elder brother, we are at liberty to understand, as the necessity of the case seems to require, the strangers who dwelt among the people of Israel; the proselytes acquired by the dispersion; or even the Samaritans, who for so long a period before the gospel era, had possession of part of the ancient kingdom of Israel, in the immediate vicinity of the rest of the Jews; all these, though aliens in blood from the children of Abraham, were yet in some sense members of the commonwealth of Israel; on a footing of inferiority, it is true, compared with the natural descendants of the patriarchs, yet not without their peculiar advantages. The moral or religious knowledge possessed by the Jew, as derived from the same scriptures

which they also received, would be theirs as well as his; and as far as they concurred in the performance of the stipulated conditions of the Mosaic covenant, so far a share in its covenanted blessings might be claimed by them also.

Now the fact of the condescension and indulgence which had at all times been displayed by the supreme Legislator of the Jews, towards a portion at least of the Gentiles, would be a strong argument of encouragement to the rest, who might be aware of that fact, to hope for the same kind and favourable treatment in behalf of themselves. The offer of gospel privileges, as hereafter extended to them, in common with the Jews, would be but in unison with this fact; and would shew that the Deity was only prosecuting by that overture, upon a large, a comprehensive, and an indiscriminate scale, the same scheme of mercy and benevolence in behalf of the Gentiles, which he had all along been developing and carrying into effect, though in a more partial manner, before.

In the reception which the father accorded to his returning and penitent son, the circumstance most prominently put forward by the narrative, and most worthy of admiration, was the unsolicited forgiveness of the past—the spontaneous burst of natural affection, overcoming all feeling of resentment, and anticipating even the errand and intentions of the penitent himself. In like manner, not only the original scheme of redemption, but in an especial manner the dispensation of grace in behalf of the Gentiles, were purely the effect of the divine love and mercy, even to the worst of its fallen and degenerate creatures. The first offer of salvation was sponta-

neously made even to them; and the very option of so great a blessing, as their restitution to favour and acceptance with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, was granted to them, uninvited and unsolicited, from nothing but the infinite goodness and the boundless benevolence of God himself. No doubt the influence of his Holy Spirit contributed its share to the success of the overture; and by enlightening the minds and touching the hearts of those to whom the offer of salvation was made, upon the terms of the gospel covenant, enabled them to comprehend its true nature, and to feel its want, to appreciate its value, and on every account to accept of it with joy and thankfulness. But the preliminary tender of so gracious an offer, the very chance afforded by the overture, so to hear and believe to their own salvation, was purely the dispensation of the kindness of God. Nor does it deserve to be unnoticed, that as the father discovered his son, and anticipated his errand, while he was still a great way distant; so were the Gentiles brought near to God, by his own act and by the spontaneous emanation of his benevolence, while they too were still *afar* off.

The treatment which was next accorded to the son, was but consistent with the cordiality of his first reception. He came, prepared himself to take the place of a servant, and content to regain admission into his native house, even by the total sacrifice of his original name and relation; but his father by a series of expressive and significant actions, more effectual far than words, speedily convinces him that he is still to be considered a son, and a dearly beloved son. And how often are the Gentile converts to Christianity reminded by the apostles, in order to contrast

their present with their former condition — how much nearer and dearer to God they had become by their conversion; how different were their relations to him, and how much the reverse of what they had been before: that whereas they had been *enemies*, now they were *friends;* whereas they *were not* his people, now they *were* his people; whereas they had been *strangers* to him, and *aliens*, now they were *sons; heirs* of God, and *coheirs* with Christ.

Though the father had taken his son to his bosom, and thereby assured him that his peace was made, yet the feast in honour of his return, and in attestation of the common joy and gratitude of himself and all his house, for the recovery of his mental and bodily soundness, could not begin, until he was conducted within. Nor could he with propriety enter under his father's roof, except in the dress which both became a son, and was proper for a guest at his father's table. The meanness of his present attire must be superseded by more suitable apparel; the effects of privation, fatigue, or travel, on his personal appearance, must first be removed. Shoes are provided for his feet; a ring is put upon his finger; and a garment, the best that the wardrobes of the house could furnish, is thrown over his limbs; and thus arrayed, he is conducted by his father himself within, and the reign of innocent mirth and rejoicing, so meet for the occasion, begins.

Now what may all this be considered so justly, as a lively portraiture of that preliminary sanctification of a corrupt nature; of that change and renovation of the inner man, to the recovery of the original image of righteousness and true holiness wherein he was created—without which it is not

possible to see God, nor to become capable of everlasting happiness hereafter, by admission even to the present enjoyment of the privileges of his gospel? That ring, which we contemplate on the finger of the prodigal son, enriched with gold of the finest quality, or sparkling with diamonds of the clearest lustre; that costly garment, of exquisite texture and corresponding tincture, which invests his limbs with purple; what are they but those gifts and graces from above, which clothe the soul of the regenerate Christian; and like the robes of Aaron, constitute her beauty and her holiness, her sanctity and her glory both? Or to come nearer to the truth, what are they but the merit of imputed righteousness, which is the only true covering of spiritual nakedness, put on by faith in a crucified Redeemer, and veiling from the eyes of God, (which are too pure to look on sin,) the opprobrium of an impure nature?

This part of the parable, then, instructs us in the most beautiful and significant manner, in the truth of this fact; that it was faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, which qualified the Gentile world to be readmitted into the family of God; faith, with its appointed consequences to their moral, and before, their corrupt and unregenerate nature; in the communication of those vivifying graces, which flow from the fountains of heaven, to whose springs faith alone can open the way—and bring both spiritual life and holiness to their recipients. Let me further remark, that as the last scene in the history of the prodigal's reception, is the festivity with which it is proposed to celebrate his return; as his father calls on his whole household to make merry and rejoice with him in common, upon an occasion so

interesting to them all; so is the reunion of the Gentiles to the household of faith, described in scripture as one of the most joyful events which the world should witness. When the prophets look forward to the period of this reunion, (a reunion, designed to obliterate all distinctions between one order or division of God's moral creatures and another, except that of being his children in common, and to make them as truly one family under one father, after incorporating both together, as they were before either was separated from the other,) they become enraptured by the prospect of it; and in the most animated language call upon external and insensible nature itself, to sympathise with the occasion, and to join in the common joy for such an event. Lastly, the very reason assigned in the parable for all this festivity, "This my son was dead, and is come to life "again, was lost, and hath been found," is one of those characteristic circumstances, which directly fix the application of the history of the prodigal to the analogy of the case of the Gentile world. In the language of scripture, the reformation of that world, and its reunion to the church of God, is similarly represented not merely as a recovery of what had been lost, but as a regeneration—a new birth—a new creation—a resurrection in one sense, of the dead itself.

As the history of the younger brother may thus be accommodated to the circumstances and fortunes of the Gentile, before and after his conversion to Christianity; so will that of the elder suit to those of the Jew. In the first place it appeared from the course of the narrative, that it was *evening* or towards the close of the *natural* day, when the prodi-

gal arrived at home; and it was evening or towards the close of the *spiritual* day, if by the idea of such a day we are at liberty to understand the appointed duration of the Mosaic œconomy—that the Gentile was readmitted into the family of faith. The elder brother was returning from his usual field employments at the time, when the return of his brother was made known to him; that is, the course of things in his father's house, as affecting any of its inmates, their several duties, their respective cares and occupations, their proper habits and modes of life, was going on as usual, when a change of the scene ensued by the coming and reception of his son from abroad; and the Mosaic œconomy was still in full force, the Jew was living in the same subjection and submission to it as ever, when the new dispensation was begun in behalf of the Gentile, which superseded the rule of the Law, and changed the relations of the Jew. A servant, or menial of the family, announced to the elder brother the fact of his younger brother's arrival, and the nature of the reception given him by their common father; and the servants of Jesus Christ, the apostles of Christianity, announced to the Jews both the fact of the admission of the Gentiles into the same family of God with themselves, and the terms on which it took place. The cordial welcome, the unexpected kindness of reception, given to his younger brother, offended the elder; and so did the dispensation of grace in behalf of the Gentiles, displease the Jews. If he had never broken with his father until now—a breach between them ensued on this occasion; and this breach, apparently, was not again made up: and one great reason of the ultimate perseverance of the

Jews in their infidelity, and consequently of their final rejection by God, was their refusal to coalesce with the Gentiles, in the common enjoyment of gospel privileges.

The state of subjection to his father, and of personal dependence upon him, in which all the years of his life had been passed, since the departure of his brother, he calls a *slavery;* but whether from the irritation of his feelings at the time, or from the truth of the fact, we need not determine. It is sufficient to observe that in language to the same effect, do the apostles speak of the service required by the ancient law, from those who were subjected to it. They call it a yoke and a burden, which neither they nor their forefathers had been able to bear; and they represent it as not the least acceptable effect of the death and passion of Christ, that their hope of present acceptance with God, and of final salvation hereafter, was no longer to be placed on the old rigid and inexorable footing. The galling yoke of the law was to be commuted for the easy one of the gospel; and the heavy, insupportable burden of Moses, for the light and tolerable load of Christ. In a word, the *bondage* of the law was thenceforth to be superseded by the *liberty* of the gospel.

Whether under the influence of the same feelings, or from the consciousness of the truth of the fact; he appeals to his father if, at any time during this past period, he had transgressed a command of *his.* The word which he uses is ἐντολὴ—and that may be properly understood of such principles of duty, and such requisitions of practical obedience, as depend on the will and injunction, the *ipse dixit* or good pleasure, of a competent authority. It would

apply therefore especially to the ritual, ceremonial, or positive part of the law of Moses, in contradistinction to the natural or moral. And if it is the Jew who is speaking in the person of the elder brother—it is in the strictness of his observance of *this* part of the law, with the hope and expectation of pleasing God thereby, that he makes his boast; a boast, which if so intended, with very little qualification may be admitted of the Jews of our Saviour's day, as likely to be founded in sincerity, and possibly to be justified by the truth of the case. For whatever latitude they might allow themselves with regard to the precepts and duties of the moral code, they could not be reproached with a wilful neglect of the ceremonial. They were too much disposed to trust to the latter, instead of the former, and to act on the principle that a strict and punctilious observance of the one, was sufficient to compensate for a lax and superficial performance of the other.

Notwithstanding this uniform obedience to his father's will, this punctual observance of all that could be required of a son, not the least indulgence had yet been conceded to him; not so much as the gratuity of a kid, to make merry with his friends: which is a lively description of the stern and uncompromising spirit of a covenant like that of Horeb, of a law like that of Moses—as founded on the strict principle of *giving* and *receiving;* of a debtor and a creditor; of a *quid pro quo;* of a promise and a condition; of a work and its wages: as exacting compliance with the very letter of its terms; as holding its subjects at all times, to the bond of their engagement; as making no allowance for human infirmity, and unavoidable derelictions of duty; as resenting the

least breach of the contract, as vitiating the whole; as requiring in short every thing on one hand, or being bound to allow, and disposed to bestow, nothing on the other.

The gift of a kid was no doubt mentioned by way of invidiously contrasting its value, with that of a fatted calf; and the constant refusal of the one to himself, as so much the more unjust and unfair, when compared with the immediate relinquishment of the other, out of compliment to his brother. And considering the law as a severe taskmaster, who would grant him no privilege, but at its utmost cost —and his own rights and advantages as consequently exclusive, because bought at their full price—at the expense of individual pains, privations, compliances, so constant and laborious; so incompatible with personal independence; so grating to personal inclinations: were the Jew to see all that he prided himself upon and supposed to be his, suddenly and gratuitously lavished on the Gentile, who had done nothing to deserve it—had suffered nothing to earn it, in comparison with himself—he might naturally be tempted to exclaim,

> Then all was lost—this labour and this pain!
> And the stern tyrant's covenant was vain!
>
> Virgil. Georg. iv.

Certain it is, that not merely contempt, but jealousy also of the Gentile, was a motive which influenced the Jew, in refusing to associate with him on a footing of equality, and as one of the people of God and the children of Abraham, as much as himself.

The elder son, indeed, was the person, who, next to the father, was most interested in the return and restoration of his brother; and most bound by duty

and station, to have sanctioned and promoted the common joy of the family, in consequence of that event: nor did it less become the Jews, nor would it have been less pertinent to their relation both to God and to the rest of mankind, instead of resenting, opposing, and thwarting the dispensation of grace in favour of the Gentile, and their admission into a share of the same moral and spiritual privileges, which they possessed themselves, to have rejoiced at it, and by all means in their power to have endeavoured to give it effect.

The elder son knew very well that the younger brother was the son of the same parent with himself; and had all the claims of a brother on his own affection: yet he was determined not to own his relationship, and speaks of him to his father as This son of thine. The Jew too was much better aware than the Gentile, that all mankind were the creatures of the same Maker, and the offspring of the same first pair, and therefore strictly brothers in descent. Yet when do we find them so acting, as if conscious of this truth; or so affected by it, as to shew a fraternal sympathy in the welfare, whether temporal or spiritual, of their Gentile brethren?

Observe too, the invidious allusion to that fact in the past history of the prodigal, his devouring the living of his father, with harlots—which was obliquely to censure not only the judgment and prudence, but the strict moral propriety of the father, in being so ready to forgive a son, who had not merely shewn no regard for his property, but was of such dissolute and vicious habits. Did the Jews, too, consider it no disparagement to the truth, the justice, the holiness and pureness of God, not merely

to deprive them as they thought unfairly of blessings and privileges which were justly their due, and ought to have been reserved to them, but to transfer them gratuitously to others who were not even fit to receive them? who had made too bad an use of former advantages to deserve fresh favours; who had never been the servants of God, but hitherto the slaves of Satan; who had never done any thing to promote his glory, but so much to dishonour and injure it; who had never known, nor acknowledged the true God, but had lived until then, in a state of apostasy from him, and in a kind of spiritual fornication, the votaries of false religions.

Yet, admitting that festivity and rejoicing were now for the first time to be instituted in the family of the father, and that, even to commemorate the recovery of its younger member; the elder son was still invited to partake of them along with the rest: and whatever indulgences had been denied to him before, the restriction was taken off now. And if unexpected or peculiar favour seemed to be extended to the Gentile, by his gratuitous reception into the church of God, and to a share of the spiritual advantages of the Jew, with none of the conditions, exactions, compliances—upon which, and in which, their enjoyment by the latter heretofore had been placed—yet the rigour of his own law was mitigated to the Jew; the terms of his own covenant were put on an easier, and more favourable footing. If gospel privileges were freely conceded to the one, the curse of the law was voluntarily abrogated to the other: if no burden was imposed on the Gentile, the yoke was lightened to the Jew. The same liberty was offered to both; the same Saviour, in his merits and

mercies, was equally rich and liberal to both, if they would be content alike to place their hopes and their dependence upon him.

Let it be remembered too, that not only was it clearly the duty of the elder brother to have taken a part in the festivity of this occasion, but he could not refuse to do so, without arresting its progress, and casting a damp on the common joy. There was a void within, which his presence alone could fill, whose proper place was at his father's right hand, and at the head of his father's table. And hence the condescension of the father, in coming out himself, and leaving the course of the celebrity interrupted, to persuade him to come in; hence the affectionate earnestness with which he labours to soothe his anger, to explain away his suspicions, to remove his jealousy, to overcome his obstinacy. We know, in like manner, how zealously, how feelingly, how diligently, the apostles of Christianity devoted their first endeavours to the conversion of their brethren, according to the flesh; how slowly, how reluctantly, and not until after repeatedly unavailing attempts, they turned at last to the Gentiles. And what is it which still defers the appearance and establishment of the kingdom of God; which still procrastinates the arrival and consummation of the marriage feast of the church, with her betrothed Lord and Spouse, but the refusal of the Jews to come in, and to mix with their brethren of the Gentiles, in the common capacity of the guests at that feast?

When the father reminded his son that he was ever with him, no doubt we may suppose he meant to contrast his more fortunate lot, in staying at home, enjoying the plenty, the peace, the security of

his father's roof—with the case of his brother, (whose reception so kindly at last, had excited his envy,) in meeting only with danger, privations, and misery abroad; and so far to suggest the inference that the very subjection and dependence, in which he speaks of this period as having been spent, had not been without its reward and compensation to himself. And doubtless, notwithstanding the footing on which the Jew was placed with regard to the peculiar covenants and requisitions of the law—the advantages necessarily attached to the situation of those whom God had chosen for his own, and brought near to himself, were many and various—not only in a temporal, but still more in a spiritual, point of view—chiefly, according to St. Paul, because to them were committed the living oracles; they were the exclusive depositaries of the revealed will of God—they only had access to the way, the truth, and the life.

When he tells him further that all which he had was his, both as his share of the patrimony originally, and as improved, and increased by his personal labours and industry, subsequently; it is plain that he wishes him to believe that no injury was likely to result to his own rights and privileges, by the return of his brother, and his reception into the family again; nor was there any cause to be jealous of the kindness extended to him, on that account. Nor does it appear that the admission of the Gentiles into the communion of the Jews, was intended to interfere with the reservation of every just and reasonable privilege, to which the latter were fairly entitled. The Gentile would not have taken precedence of the Jew in any thing, though he might have been advanced to an equality

with him in some things. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; and certain distinctions of honour and preeminence stood pledged to his ancient people. Read the forty-fifth psalm, and this truth will be set in a clear point of view. The Jewish church is there described as the chosen bride of an august consort: as a queen surrounded by a train of ladies: as a mother, multiplied in a fair and numerous offspring, and both blessed and adorned by her own fecundity; which I understand to be meant of the churches of the Gentiles, subordinate to the Jewish. The effect of such a subordination is any thing but injurious to the rank, the dignity, the favour and estimation, of the principal party; and invests her with more glory, enriches her with greater numbers, enlarges the pale of her dominion, and extends the sphere of her ascendancy and supremacy, far beyond what they could be, if she stood alone, and independent of all her associates.

Finally, it did not appear what effect the persuasions of the father produced on the son: and this silence might be considered ominous. The parable left him expostulating with the elder brother; as the matter of fact, from the time of the first publication of the gospel until this day, has left Christianity remonstrating with the Jew, on his continued reluctance to associate with the Gentile: and with as little success in this instance, as for ought which is declared to the contrary, attended the expostulations of the father in the other.

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GEN. THEOL. SEM. OF THE

7632
226.8J
G86 Vol 3
Greswell Edward
On the Parables etc.
DEC 10 '60 J. Wingett JAN 10 '67

226.8J
G86 v.3

7632